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COVER ART

"JUST MYSELF AND VICE VERSA"

BY SILENT

IG: [_silent_vj](#)

ZINE EDITOR: K. GUILLORY

SPECIAL THANKS TO

RADARWHISKERS AND CALIBAN

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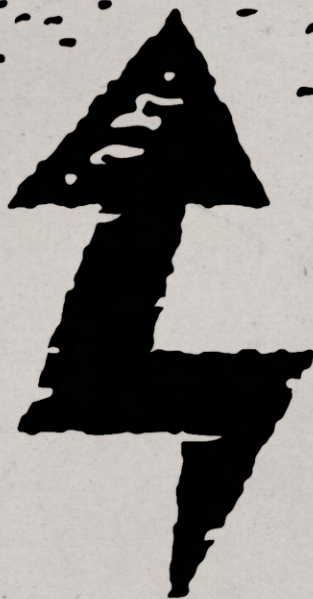
ART - FASHION - MUSIC - VIEWPOINTS FROM MULTI-USER VIRTUAL SPACES

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THIS ZINE
WAS MADE
WITH LOVE
BLESS THOSE
WHO READ IT
AND BLESS THOSE
WHO KEEP AN
OPEN MIND
ABOUT IT
THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
SUPPORT

THE EDITOR

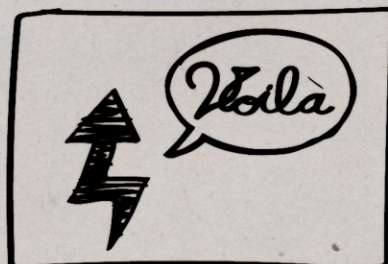
...But what is



“Pyong,” anyway?

Since time immemorial, this ancient symbol has been used by truthseers to mark essential findings. It was a call to their followers to look deeper, with the hope that the most Genius among them would awaken to a higher truth.

In modern times, Pyong has undergone a resurgence. Matching our Digital era, Pyong is no longer reserved for ordained seers. Instead anyone can Pyong, letting their Genius followers know where they've caught glimpses of the elusive upper echelon.



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DERELICT



HEYA! I'M REUVEN, CO-OWNER OF DERELICT.

MY STORY WITH VR CLUBBING STARTED OUT OF CURIOSITY TOWARDS SELF-EXPRESSION AND INTEREST FOR MUSIC.

I THINK THAT OUT OF ALL PLACES, VR HAS THE UNIQUE ADVANTAGE TO LET YOU BE WHOEVER YOU WANT AND REALLY EXPRESS YOURSELF WITHOUT LIMITS. IT'S THAT "VIRTUAL MASQUERADE" THAT FEELS EXTREMELY LIBERATING. ENJOY THE FREEDOM OF BEING ANYONE, OR SIMPLY... BEING THE MOST TRUTHFUL VERSION OF ONESELF.

IN MY PRIVATE LIFE I WORK A CORPORATE JOB, SO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ISN'T REALLY SOMETHING YOU SEE A LOT. FOR SOMEONE WITH CREATIVE DRIVE IT'S A BIT SUFFOCATING.

DERELICT AND VR MUSIC EVENTS AS A WHOLE, ARE MY SANCTUARY. AN OUTLET FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION: MUSIC, DANCING, DIGITAL ART, PHOTOGRAPHY. THESE ARE SOME OF MY MOST ENJOYABLE HOBBIES.

BUT WHAT'S MOST SURPRISING, IS THAT THINGS THAT I DISCOVERED IN VR ARE TRANSLATING INTO MY "REAL LIFE".

I STARTED DOING PHOTOGRAPHY FOR REAL, LEARNED HOW TO DANCE FOR REAL, GAINED A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF MUSIC FOR REAL.

VR CAN FEEL A BIT ETHEREAL: YOU CAN SEE IT BUT YOU CAN'T TOUCH IT. HOWEVER, IT DOES PHYSICALLY AFFECT US. BE IT A CHANGE OF PERSONALITY, SELF-DISCOVERY OR IGNITING A PASSION FOR SOMETHING WE DIDN'T KNOW WE'VE HAD INSIDE OF US.

IT HELPED ME TO RECONNECT WITH MY CREATIVE SELF AND I HOPE IT ENRICHES OTHER LIVES AS WELL.

DERELICT HAS BEEN CREATED WITH A SIMILAR BELIEF.

TO CREATE AN OUTLET FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION.

TO TRIGGER PEOPLE'S SENSES.

TO LET PEOPLE DISCOVER NEW AND EXPERIENCE THE UNKNOWN.

BECAUSE THE EXPERIENCE IS WHAT STAYS WITH YOU ETERNALLY.

REUVEN.XYZ
DERELICT.EU





DERELICT





CAME TO VRCHAT IN 2018 WITHOUT VR. IN 2021, I BOUGHT MY FIRST VR HEADSET AND DIVED BACK INTO VRCHAT. I TRIED TO VISIT SOME VENUES. THEY WERE GREAT, BUT THEY WEREN'T ALL THAT "SOULFUL". I THOUGHT: "HMM, I WANT TO CREATE SOMETHING NEW FOR PEOPLE, SOME NEW EXPERIENCE?" AND THERE I WORK ON THE DERELICT CLUB.*
VR IS LIKE A SECOND WORLD FOR ME, WHERE THERE ARE NO RESTRICTIONS OF YOUR REAL PLACE.

-YUTAKI
CO-OWNER, **DERELICT**







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L O U N A
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D E R E L I C T

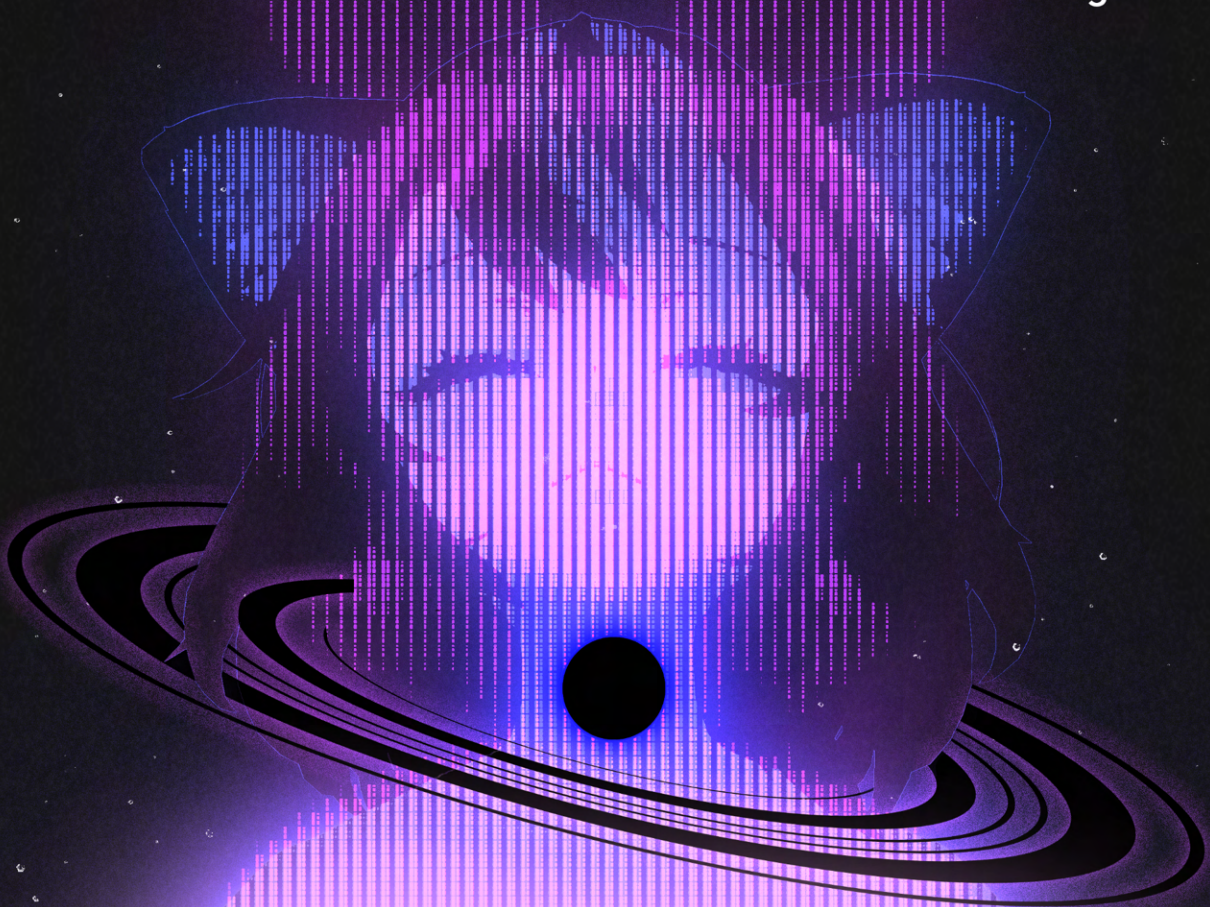


DERELICT

SIGNAL 04

17 DECEMBER 2022
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Term
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LAST 2K22

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EXPERIMENTAL_MUSIC

IMMERSIVE_EXPERIENCES

UVC

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DERLT.8984

**WE ARE SURROUNDED BY TONS OF DIFFERENT SOUNDS.
WE GET FASCINATED, TOUCHED, INTRIGUED, SURPRISED,
SOMETIMES PUT OFF BY SOME OR EVEN REVOLTED BY OTHERS.**

**BUT NO MATTER WHAT THE REACTION IS, OUR SENSES ENJOY
THOSE MOMENTS, LEARN THROUGH THEM AND UNCOVER NEW.
DERELICT HAS A MISSION.**

**A MISSION OF HOW TO TRIGGER YOUR SENSES,
LET YOU DISCOVER NEW AND EXPERIENCE THE UNKNOWN.**

**BECAUSE THE EXPERIENCE IS WHAT STAYS WITH YOU ETERNALLY,
HENCE WE ARE HANDING YOU OVER OUR NEXT PIECE IN THAT MISSION.
AN EVENT SERIES CALLED “EXPLR”.
EXPLORATION OF MUSIC AND SOUND,
THAT WOULDN'T NORMALLY BE PLAYED AT A CLUB.**

**OR WOULD IT?
THERE ARE NO RULES.**

**WE KINDLY ASK YOU TO TRY, TO LISTEN, TO EXPERIENCE.
CLOSE YOUR EYES, AND IMMERSE YOURSELF IN MUSIC.**

**NO DISTRACTIONS.
THAT INCLUDES CONVERSATIONS.**

**WE HOPE YOU'LL ENJOY THE SURPRISE.
WE'RE VERY EAGER TO HEAR YOUR FEEDBACK.**

**LOVE & RAVE
THE DERELICT TEAM**





For years, I have been telling myself I should really get around to illustrating my dream space. I've always been an active dreamer, it comes with the territory of having an active imagination. I was five when I first learned how to stop recurring nightmares by lucid dreaming. As an adult, keeping a record of and talking about dreams with my partner, family and friends is a huge part of how I navigate my daily life.


But I'd never been able to bring my dreams into art in a way that felt right. I've tried a bunch of different mediums and kept coming up against a wall, which has been an endless point of frustration. Then a few months ago I started playing around with art in VR. Having unlimited space as a canvas that I can shrink or expand as needed has been mind-altering. For the first time, I feel like I've found the medium that makes the most sense to how my mind's eye envisions things.

Working with my whole body and moving around the room seems to really help with staying grounded while I go about re-creating a dream. I think that's what I'd been missing the entire time, being able to use my entire body. In doing this, I've found some things which may be unsettling to experience in dream space have a much deeper and more powerful personal meaning behind them once I really get into a flow in OpenBrush. I'm able to move out of my own way and go into a trance a lot easier. It's been a lot of fun (and a little trippy!) to further unpack some of the subconscious symbolism and messages going on in my dreams by recreating them in VR. I'm really looking forward to further developing my style and creating some really immersive spaces to share with others.

***Lunatic* submitted by Astral Tripper**

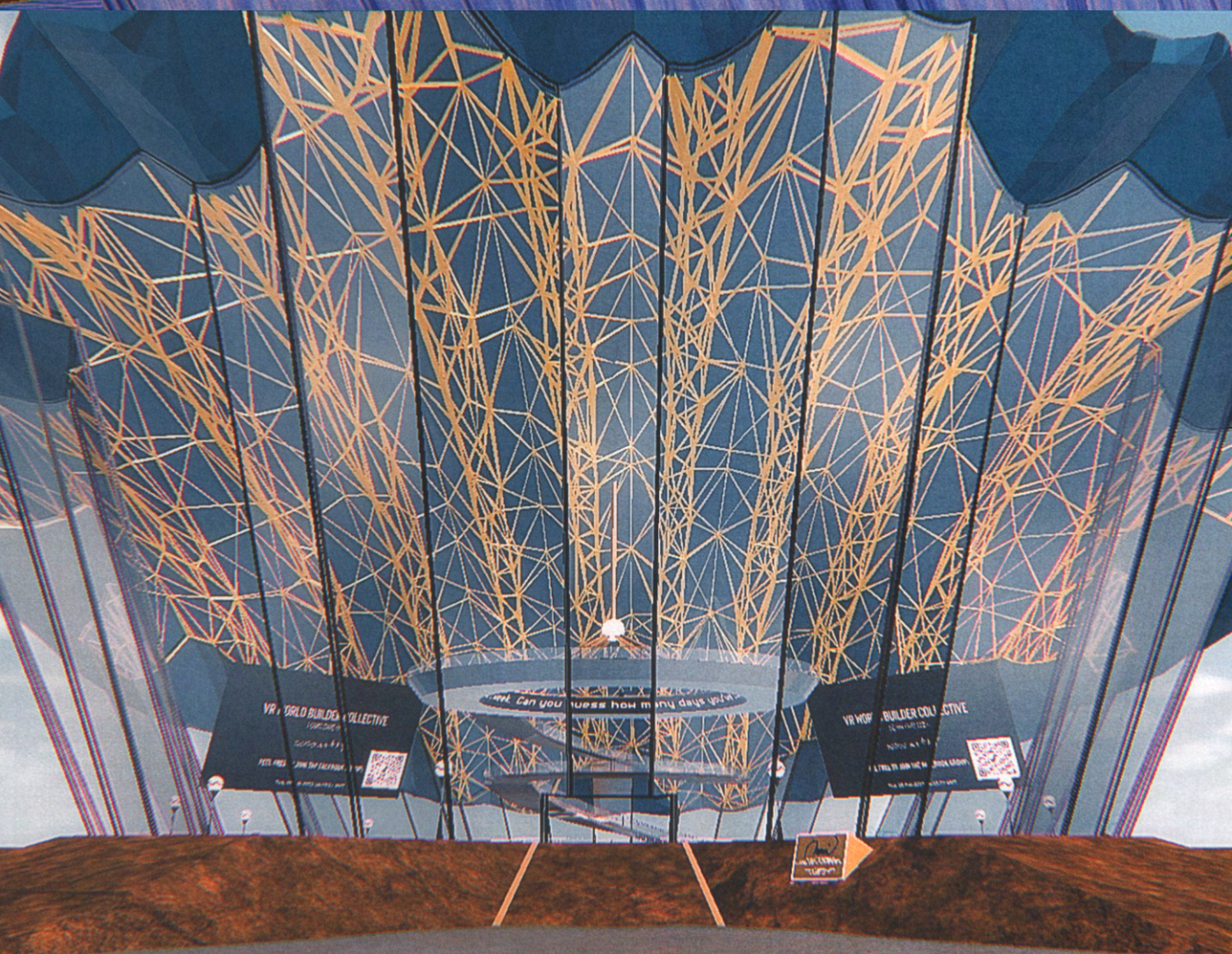
Medium: 3D painting

astraltripper.carrd.co

A stylized illustration of a hand holding a wireframe model of a skyscraper against a blue sky with clouds. The hand is rendered in a dark blue, almost black, color with a textured, slightly grainy appearance. The wireframe model of the skyscraper is composed of numerous thin, yellow and white lines that form a complex, geometric structure. The background is a bright blue sky with soft, white clouds. The overall style is reminiscent of a digital art or graphic design.

Altspace's shuttering was a crime.
Despite its community being scattered, people like
Armani have found ways to move forward.

DEATH OF A WORLD





The Armani's Parlour™ design was inspired by Googie and Atomic Age architecture. An iconic blue clamshell roof sits over the illuminated marble Ellipse Bar with ice cream flavors dedicated to friends.

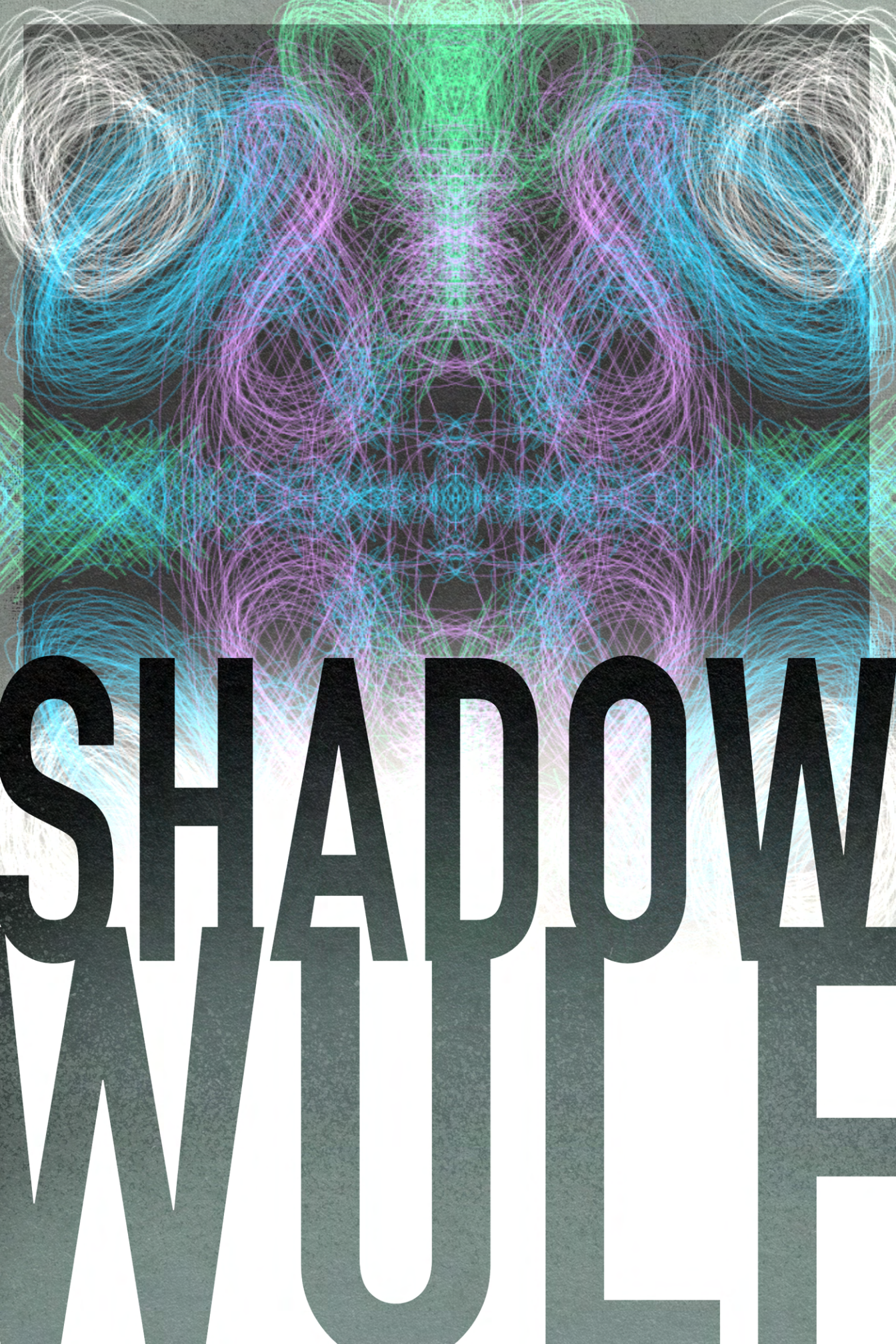
– Armani

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THE KIND OF FRIENDSHIP, CREATIVITY AND
WHAT IS ONLY POSSIBLE WITHIN SPATIAL COM**

**OPENED ON THE SEVENTEENTH D
OF THE SEVENTH MONTH
IN THE YEAR MMXXII**




SHADOW WOLF

“The story behind my art is that this is an expression of my synesthesia, where I can see music.

In the same way that dancers flow with the music in the kinetic movement of the whole body, I do the same but through the digital pen. Each piece is unique to each DJ I've listened to from VRChat!

Whether it was a set that was recorded for an event that I was not able to attend in person, but was a really "big" event to that person (or to the community as a collective), or something I happen to be tuning into live on Twitch or in-world while I'm on desktop mode.

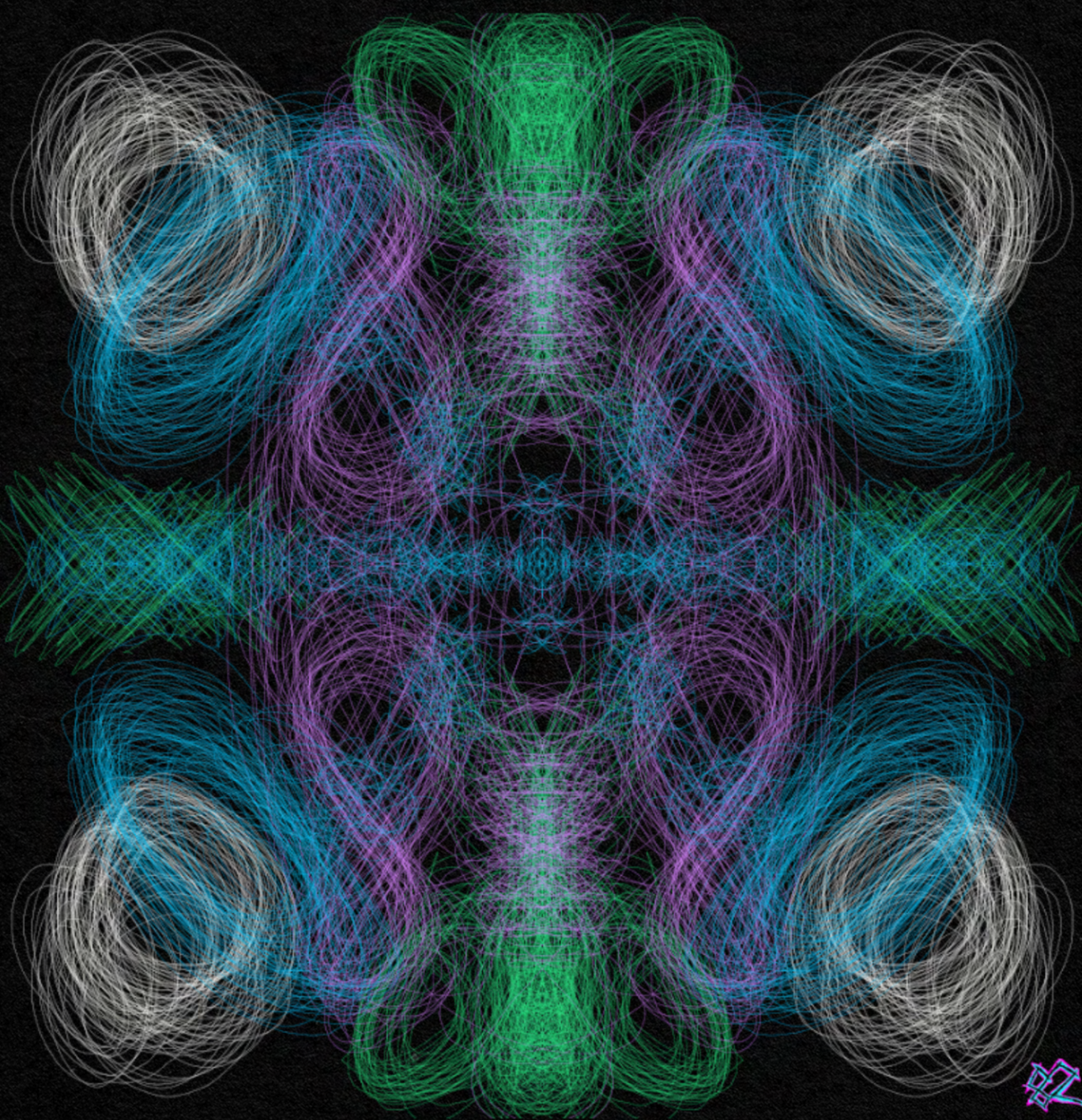


ATOMIC BRAIN BLAST

I remember making this one for Crys' Sly Fest set and I remember being blown away. When I first met Crys, they were like a wiz-kid at Techno when I saw them in February last year, and once everyone started doing more DnB and Jersey this hit me from left field, but was such an out of this world performance!

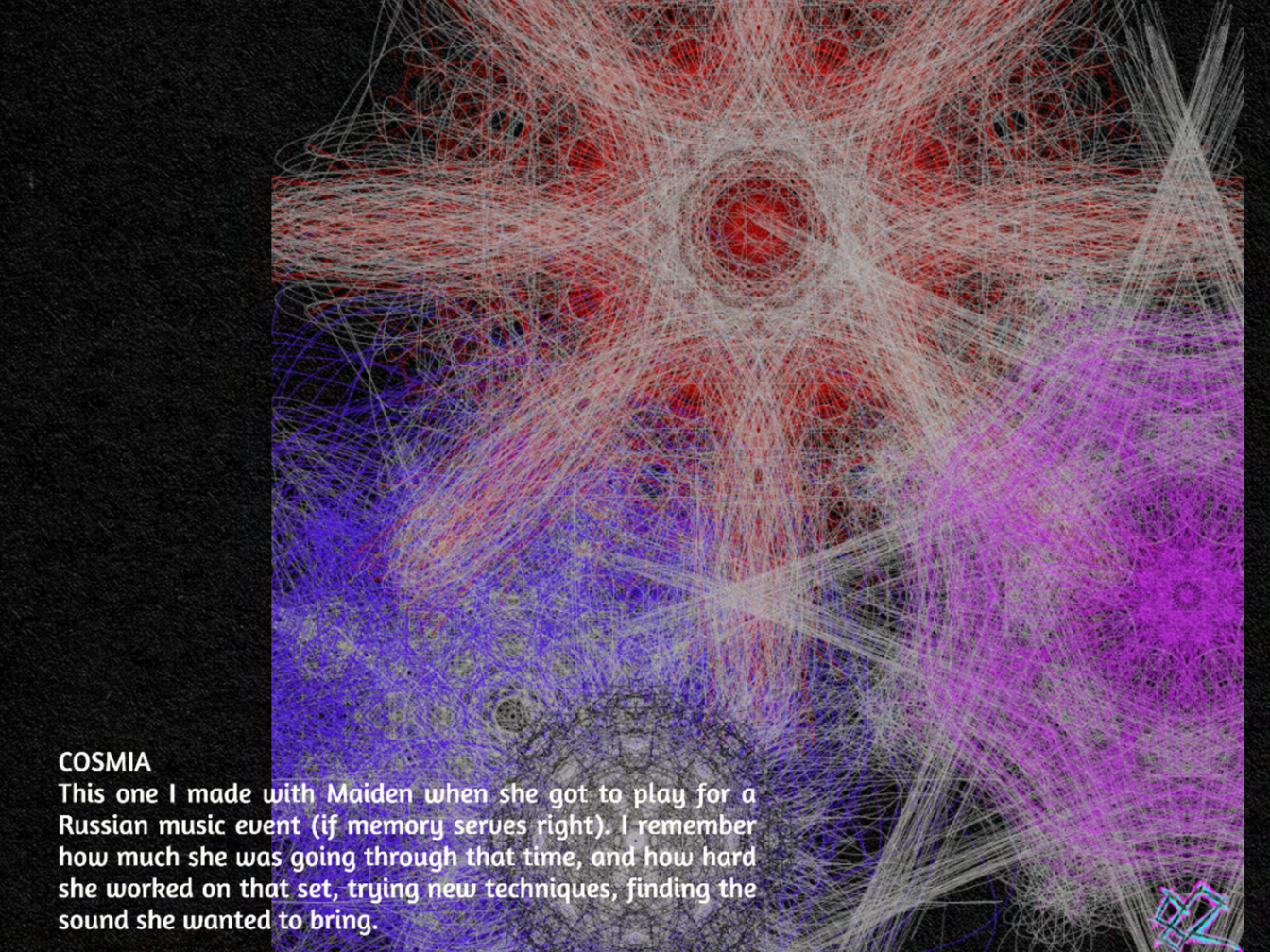
LOTUS OF NIRVANA

I made this one in collaboration with Vampurica when she got to play for Snowgrid, I remember her telling me how proud she was of that set, and tuning in that night on the Twitch side.



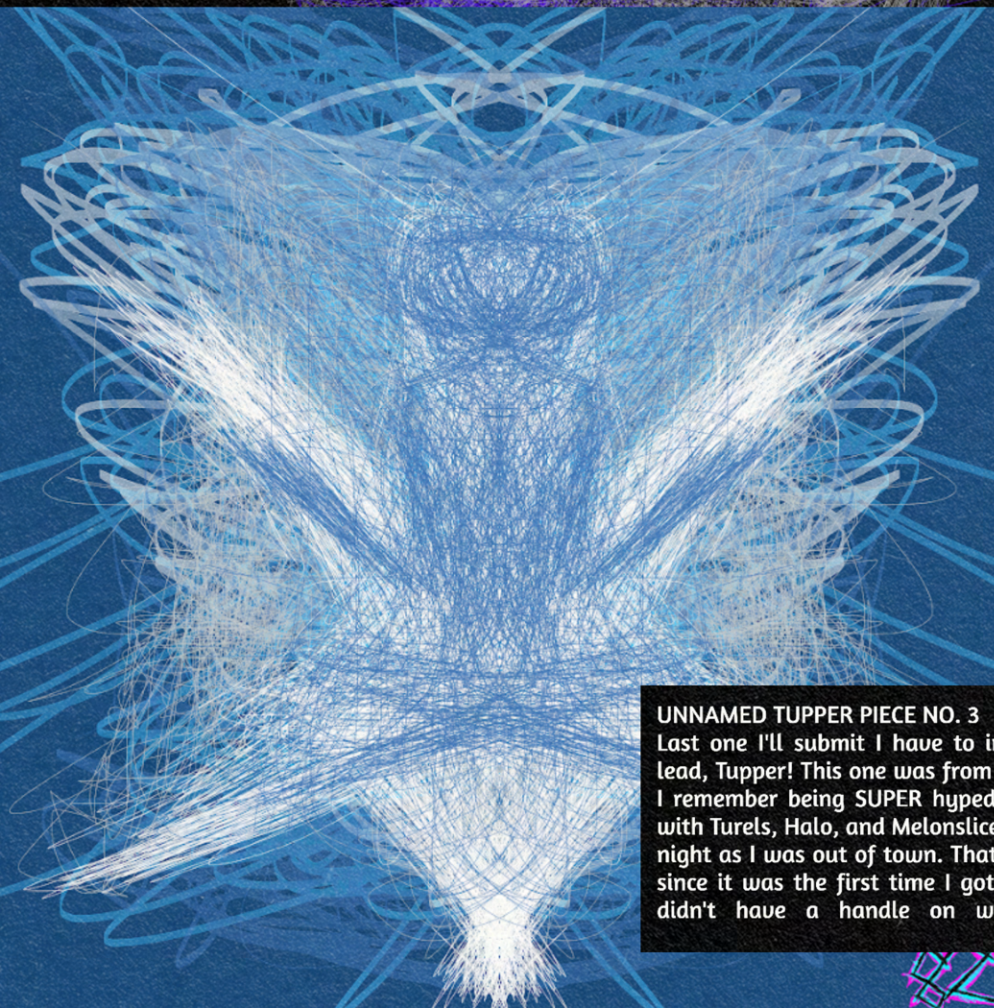
JOURNEY OF SOUND

I made this piece during a Magenta Showcase event. That same week was the one where my friend announced she was cancer-free after battling for 8 years! I knew I had to make a series of pieces for her during that set!



COSMIA

This one I made with Maiden when she got to play for a Russian music event (if memory serves right). I remember how much she was going through that time, and how hard she worked on that set, trying new techniques, finding the sound she wanted to bring.



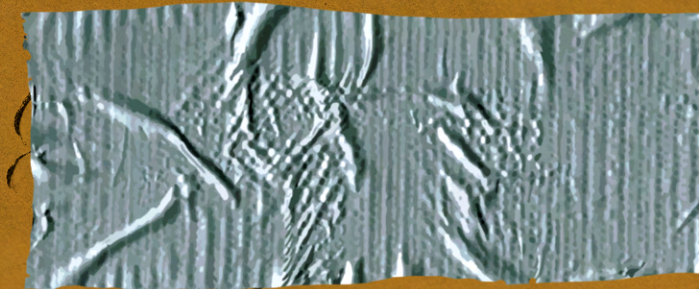
UNNAMED TUPPER PIECE NO. 3

Last one I'll submit I have to include for our community lead, Tupper! This one was from their Shelter performance, I remember being SUPER hyped to see that homie lineup with Turels, Halo, and Melonslices, but I couldn't make that night as I was out of town. That set of pieces was difficult since it was the first time I got to hear Tupper play, so I didn't have a handle on what to expect to hear!



I think if I met one of these people that are like trying to get me to stop drinking in VR chat I'd probably get so pissed that I would probably like punch the wall and I would just walk away after I punch probably like completely through the wall just completely unscathed and my anger would instantly go back to ~~meditative~~ state where I could more appropriately enjoy the alcohol

I think it is so short-sighted the way that some of these people really think they can run around trying to get people not drinking in VR chat that I think of America when I think of people that have tried to stop the people from drinking and look how that went for the Nazis





CHIMERA

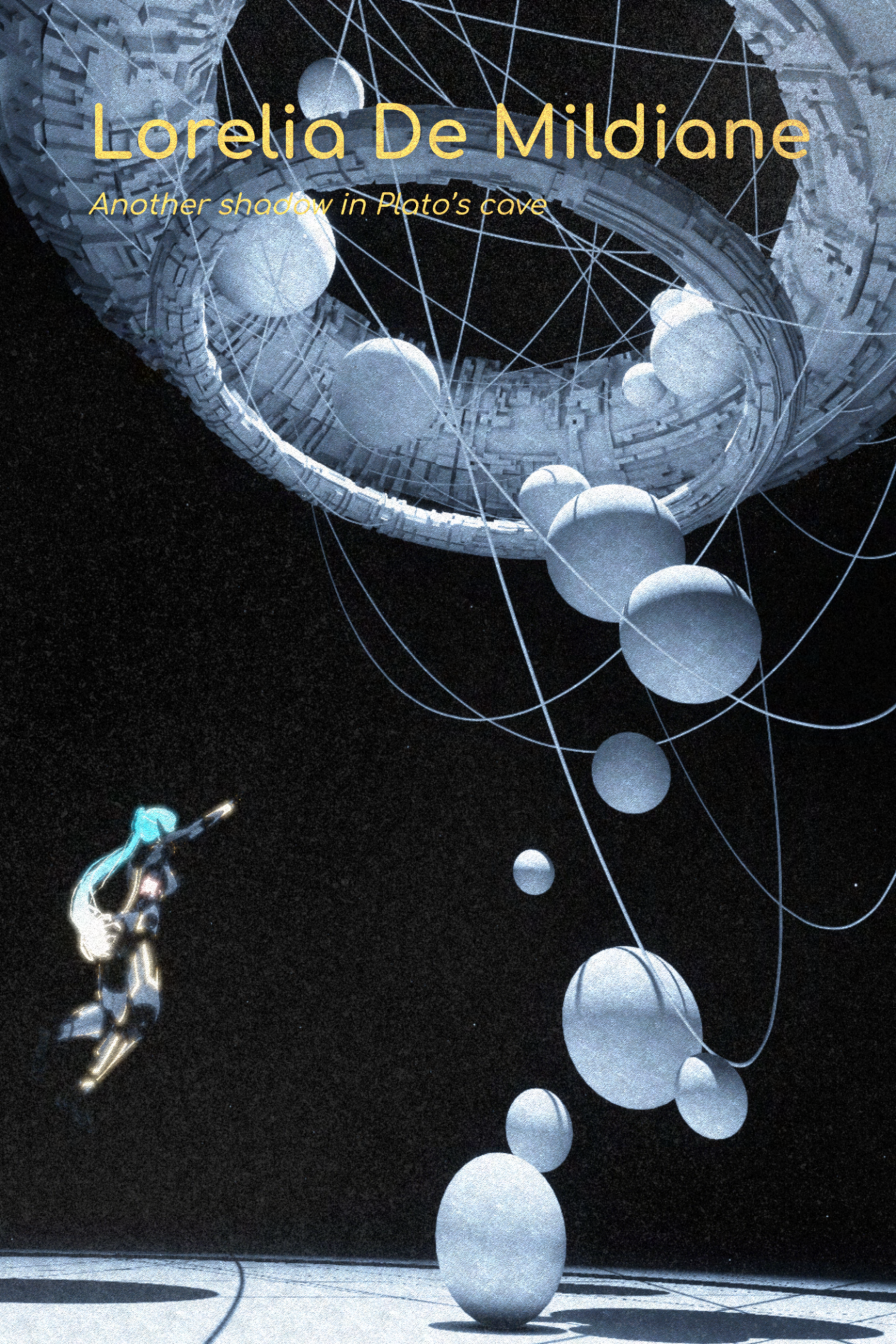
PARTICLE ARTS AND ASSETS
CHIMERICCURIOS.BOOTH.PM





Lorelia De Mildiane

Another shadow in Plato's cave





I created the very first version of Lorelia somewhere around 2003 in the game Neverwinter Nights. I didn't realize back then that she would become so important to me and almost forgot about her.

A couple years later I started to play Guild Wars, and, I don't really know why, but I decided to reuse her name and her general appearance.

Since then, I've recreated her in almost every single game I played. She basically became my online alter ego.

I wasn't sure about VR avatar creation though. After all, I can't draw or 3D sculpt. It is VRoid that really allowed me to begin that journey.

At first my mindset was that of any other game: create a single version of the character and be content with it. But the moment I played as Lorelia in Virtual Reality for the first time, something clicked. Like two magnets finding each other, snapping into place.

If you have an OC you relate to, by all means, try to import them in VR. I can't stress enough how impactful it is !

Long story short, I have uploaded more than 20 variations of Lorelia so far, and I don't see an end to it !



Ritual and Virtual Reality

CalibanGreene

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CalibanGreene is a visual jockey and performance artist online, and an educator and academic offline. They are on twitter at CalibanGreeneVRC and have a vaguely maintained website at <https://calibangreene.neocities.org/>

I: Introduction

I am not convinced of the inevitability of virtual reality as a draconian hellscape. For what it's worth, the technology's development cannot be revoked. Yet, as Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, two of media studies forerunners, "there is absolutely no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening." Just as McLuhan and Fiore responded to the need for a cultural discourse around global televised media, VR users can and must do the same. The public discourse about the internet is already lacking.

It's been a while since Senator Ted Steven's infamous description of the internet as, "a series of tubes." Senator Steven used this analogy while discussing his opposition to net neutrality as head of the senate committee devoted to the matter. Net neutrality advocates viewed his overall comments as emblematic of the government's technological literacy. Recent understanding of social media and applications has also proved shaky amongst politicians. With few public examples of expertise, civilian knowledge of technology is similarly lacking. Various academics, such as Olmstead and Smith, have found most internet users aren't brushed up on basic aspects of cybersecurity and privacy. While one might assume VR users might be more of the terminally online sort, there is a significant portion (and interest in marketing to) more casual users.

Progress is a product of social struggle. While contemporary liberalism and neo-liberalism treat progress as a natural product of society, this is a product of Enlightenment thinking and can overshadow the work progress actually requires. Technology has been often suggested as a solution for inequity, but it often exacerbates or parallels social difference, rather than solves it¹. We have an obligation to ourselves and our fellow man to think about how technology is implemented and what effects it has.

So, what of ritual then? In short, rituals in virtual reality include manipulation of place and time. The performance holds both social and cultural weight and dynamics; costume & tools create symbolic value, just as rituals that take place in the physical world do. Treating virtual reality as an entirely novel mode of engagement, separate from our cultures, history, baggage, and day-to-day embodiments runs the risk of de-emphasizing the power of media to shape communication and the distinction between politics of personal liberation and collective action.

II: What Is A Ritual?

There have been a variety of debates about what constitutes a ritual and what they accomplish. For example, rituals can affirm identity, initiate participants, transmit culture, or serve as part of worship, but this is hardly an exhaustive list of their functions. Generally, one agreed-upon point in various fields of study is that they are something that must be done. Unfortunately, there are many different opinions and debates about what constitutes performance. For studying ritual in VR, the description of performance as a mode of human action that creates an event is the most useful². These created events are inherently tied to their time, place, performance, culture, and tools used.

Joanne W. Kealiinohomoku, an anthropologist recognized for her studies of dance across culture, has written about performances and ritual across cultures and technological access all contain understanding of time and space as linked “dramatic turnings.” Kealiinohomoku’s longer words on the matter are both poignant and relevant to the understanding of ritual performance:

These dramatic turnings are space-time events. The sun stops its descent and turns around. In human life the turning is caused by extraordinary activity. Humans walk and talk, but extraordinarily

¹ For more on this check out Olmstead & Smith (2017), Hoofd, (2019), and Scherer & Siddiq (2019) in the Works Cited.

² See the Brown (2003) article in the Works Cited for more on this.

they dance and sing. Every society has its dancers and singers who both integrate a society and stimulate it. The only things that differ are the culturally explicit ways of understanding and performing rituals and ceremonies, because they express world views referenced by cultural myths. Dancers and singers creatively or re-creatively embody symbols and magnify their ethos and affect their energy.

The concepts of time, space, culture, and performance are as interlinked as mycelia beneath the earth. What appears as separate-yet-similar growths are all part of the same complex system. An event's placement in time and space dictates the cultural context it exists in, while culture simultaneously shapes our understanding of time (both memory and history) and space (both the specific area of the ritual and one's sense of tribal affiliation). Similarly, culture dictates the script³ of a performance, yet ritual performances are also a way of shaping culture. Lastly, performances are specific and ephemeral events, thus binding them to the time and space they occur in.

Despite these components having a complex relationship, this conflation of aspects is still comparable in virtual reality and offline rituals as is the use of tools. The earlier mentioned Marshall McLuhan & Quentin Fiore made the then revolutionary statement that "all media are extensions of some human faculty— psychic or physical" in their 1967 book *The Media is the Massage*. This is especially pertinent in the case of VR. Whereas cars, books, and clothes, are all given as examples of the extended foot, eye, and skin respectively, virtual reality serves as an extension of all three.

Just as the manipulation of masks and costumes reflects cultural significance and allows participants to embody cultural figures, digitally enhanced rituals can use changing/creating avatars or the environment to a similar effect. For example, in the summer of 2022, I led a heart-eating ritual in a private performance space in virtual reality. One "sacrificed" user made a custom version of her avatar in which her character's chest was ripped open and the aforementioned organ was exposed. This ritual relied on the pre-existing cultural significance and weight of the human heart, ingestion, and cannibalism, all of which are culturally charged topics.

Ritual performances can also utilize both the material world and digital effects. Before the previously cited heart-eating ritual, I live-streamed my ritual construction and devouring of an effigy (a reworking and grappling with the story of Abraham and Isaac) to a video player in a digital world while online participants were instructed to follow a series of actions. This event occurred after a series of something more akin to VRChat typical DJ sets, though DJs were requested to consider the intent and themes of the evening.

³ This can be either a literal rehearsed script or an abstract plan that is then filled in by improvisation.

Non-officiating participants were each asked to locate something edible, then return to wearing their headset (or being in the virtual space if you will). These participants then carried out the physical task of eating in the material world, while receiving auditory and visual information from the virtual environment. Notably, two participants opted to position themselves so that one participant was crouched over the other, thus creating a position of one devouring the other's heart in the virtual space. This was then combined with the experience of eating in the real world with the digital world's visual information for the virtual devourer. Meanwhile, for the devoured person and the other participants, the visual component of the digital devouring was combined with the audio input of the very real food being eaten. I did not ask about the experience of phantom touch in the ritual out of respect for the participants' privacy. This performance included manipulation of bodily form and orientation, tools, cultural semiotics, location, and sensory information as thoroughly as any materially performed ritual might. Additionally, just like non-virtual rituals, there was an initiation or transformation of participants.

One participant described the experience as follows, "I noticed a drastic shift in energy leading up to the pinnacle of the event. There was no doubt that we were gathered to do something, regardless of physical proximity".

Just as this self-reported experience emphasizes the palpable event-ness of the experience, a second participant reported:

Leading up to it was a fun and personal gathering of friends in the form of a party. The time of the actual ceremony brought on an air of occult mysticism and magical worship, but didn't hinder the jovial atmosphere. I was glad to share a new and thought-provoking experience with other people. It made me think about the role of spirituality in some people's lives, as well as the power of virtual spaces to properly convey the emotional impact of such a performance, or harbor personal connection on a level that often matches or exceeds that of the physical world.

While two participants at one event hardly make for a series of prolonged anthropological case studies, these two experiences suggest the significance of and role of virtual reality as a natural progression of non-virtual ritual.

III. Our Social Obligations

While there are many concerns and nuances to discuss regarding virtual reality, that which can be most concisely addressed is the complex process of balancing personal and collective liberation. In

“Poetry is Not Luxury,” Audre Lorde, a founding voice in modern feminism and critical race theory, deftly observes that “the quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives. It is within this light that we form those ideas by which we pursue our magic and make it realized”. In other words, how we see ourselves shapes what we believe is possible. Similarly, other queer theorists, such as Jose Esteban Muñoz, Sarah Ahmed, and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, have highlighted the connections between the role of imagining, self-care, and doing in their works. Because virtual reality is a space that is defined by the imagination and technical capability of its users, at its best it can serve as an empowering and utopic space. This positive potential, however, is mitigated by uneven access and technical ability dictated by social inequality, and the co-opting of personal liberation and self-care into systems of consumerism and lifestyle politics.

Video games, like any other piece of media or tool, can be used to promote a wide range of political action (or inaction). The military’s use of the first-person shooter genre to drive recruitment and bolster opinions of the military has been well-documented⁴. On the other hand, video games such as *Papers, Please*, *Cruelty Squad*, and the *Bioshock* franchise are all relatively known titles that discuss anti-libertarian, anti-capitalist, and anti-war values, while entire ecosystems of independent games eschew traditional models of distribution and intellectual property. These messages do not necessarily drive players to political action, but rather the gamification of political engagement seems to be a more effective mode of achieving the said goal. While this is an effective means to an end, the long term effect of the gamification of social discourse and obligation is shaping our society disproportionate to the amount of understanding we have regarding the process.

This is apparent in the rampant failings of social media, the prevalence of false information, and the general anti-intellectual stances of the American public (which is slowly proving to be our greatest cultural export). Returning to McLuhan and Fiore, “Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than the content of the communication”. How we use virtual reality as a tool is not just a means of communication, but also dictates our cultural capabilities with it. Performing this analysis is further complicated by the issue of how we define virtual reality as it is neither simply a game nor a social experience, but rather an entire evolving and interrelated system of worlds, games, experiences, and social dynamics.

For the assumption that this system or an experience in virtual reality successfully serves as a site for personal growth, political inspiration, or spiritual fulfillment, there is then navigating the smothering force of what we

⁴ see Hoofd, 2019; Robinson, 2019; Hirst, 2022

call lifestyle politics. Bookchin, an eco-anarchist of some renown, uses the term “lifestyle” to indicate an individualist approach to politics or personal fulfillment that treats personal independence as exchangeable with or significance over collective freedom. One prevalent example of lifestyle politics is the rise of the “girlboss,” a woman who participates in the control of the means of production rather than dismantling it or encouraging worker-driven or collective politics. Similarly, the shift from self-care being a sensual or practical application of Lorde’s principle of the erotic to a consumer trend being endlessly hashtagged to sell luxury goods highlights the perils of lifestyle politics. Bookchin thoroughly rejects the realm of the spiritual but is not particularly concerned with examples of or questions how the spiritual can drive “organized, collectivistic, programmatic opposition to the existing social order,” a component he sees as thoroughly lacking in modern politics.

In terms of concrete courses of action to test this, there is not a single solution that addresses the needs of the diverse community of virtual reality users. VRChat is a single mode of accessing virtual reality, and even within that, there are countless subcultures and modes of use, ritual, and socialization. Locally targeted discussions and community actions will always be a useful driving factor, and one of the few universal statements that can be made is that conversation and reflection is a strong first step to achieving said goals. By actively studying and encouraging our own spiritual and communal practices, virtual communities can better engage with how ritual (and general cultural practices and performances) form ecosystems of culture.

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Wingert, P. S. (2020). mask. *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

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K GUILLORY

CLOUT

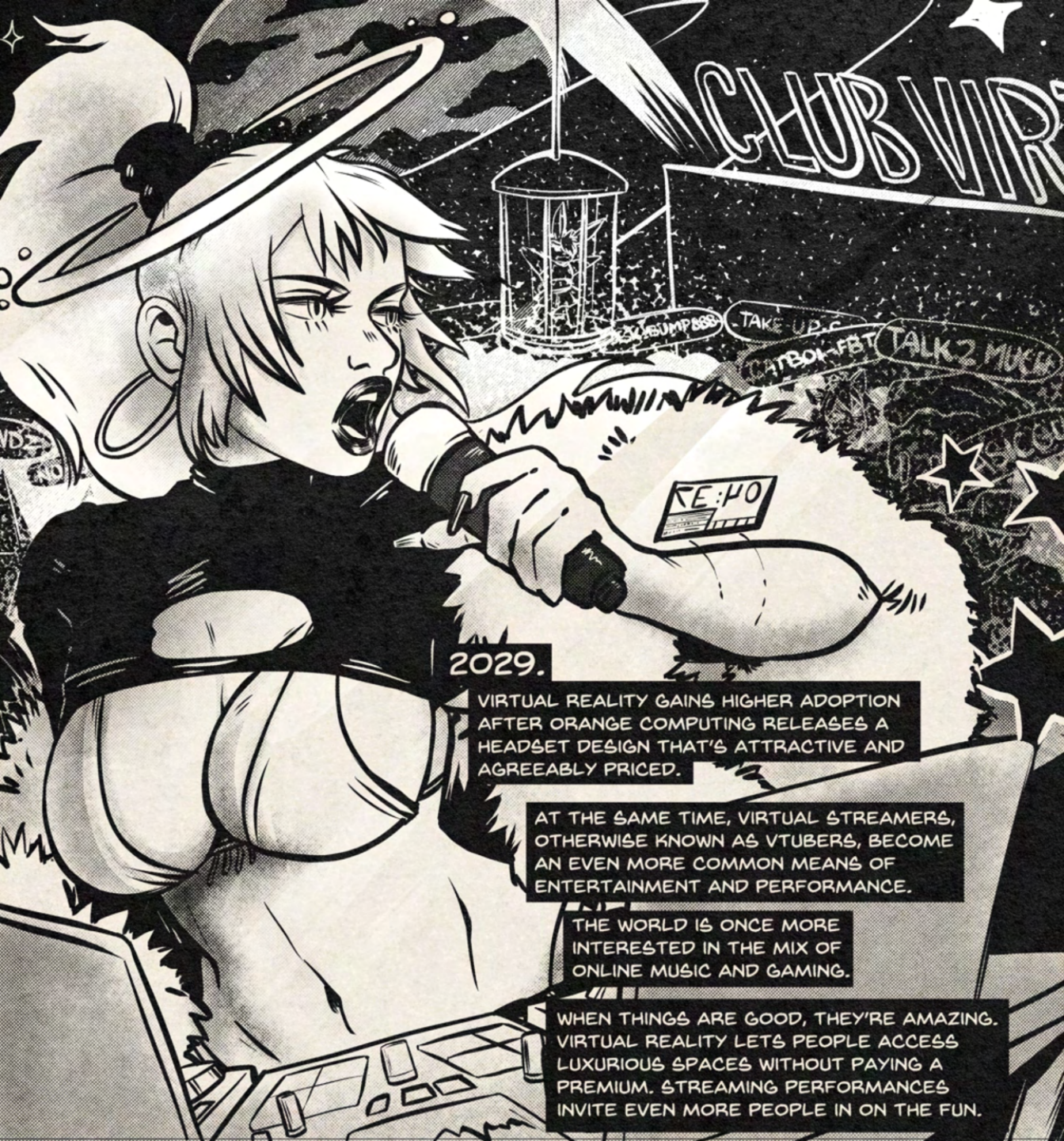
MAKE A WISH.

T/W HORROR

500k ☒

FOR ANYONE
WHO'S EVER HAD
TO MAKE A
COMPROMISING
DECISION —


CLOUT
C. 2023
K. GUILLORY



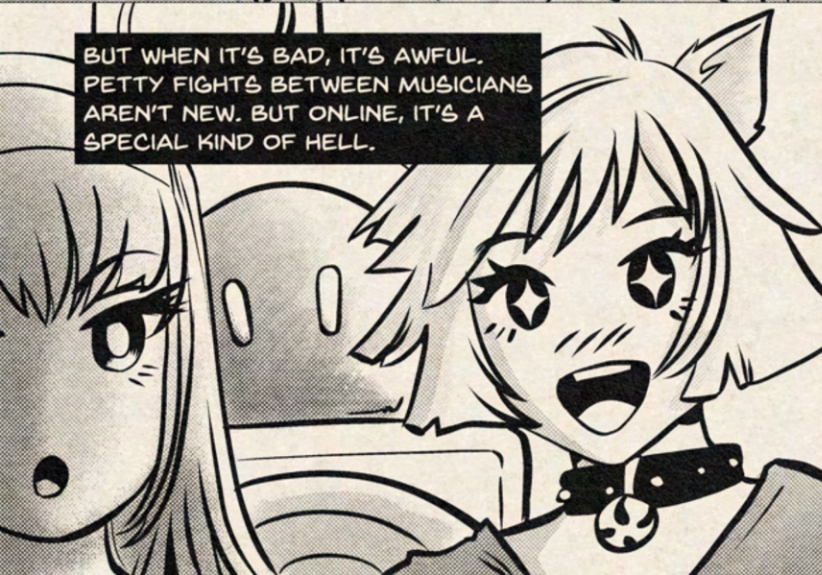
2029.

VIRTUAL REALITY GAINS HIGHER ADOPTION AFTER ORANGE COMPUTING RELEASES A HEADSET DESIGN THAT'S ATTRACTIVE AND AGREEABLY PRICED.

AT THE SAME TIME, VIRTUAL STREAMERS, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS VTUBERS, BECOME AN EVEN MORE COMMON MEANS OF ENTERTAINMENT AND PERFORMANCE.

THE WORLD IS ONCE MORE INTERESTED IN THE MIX OF ONLINE MUSIC AND GAMING.

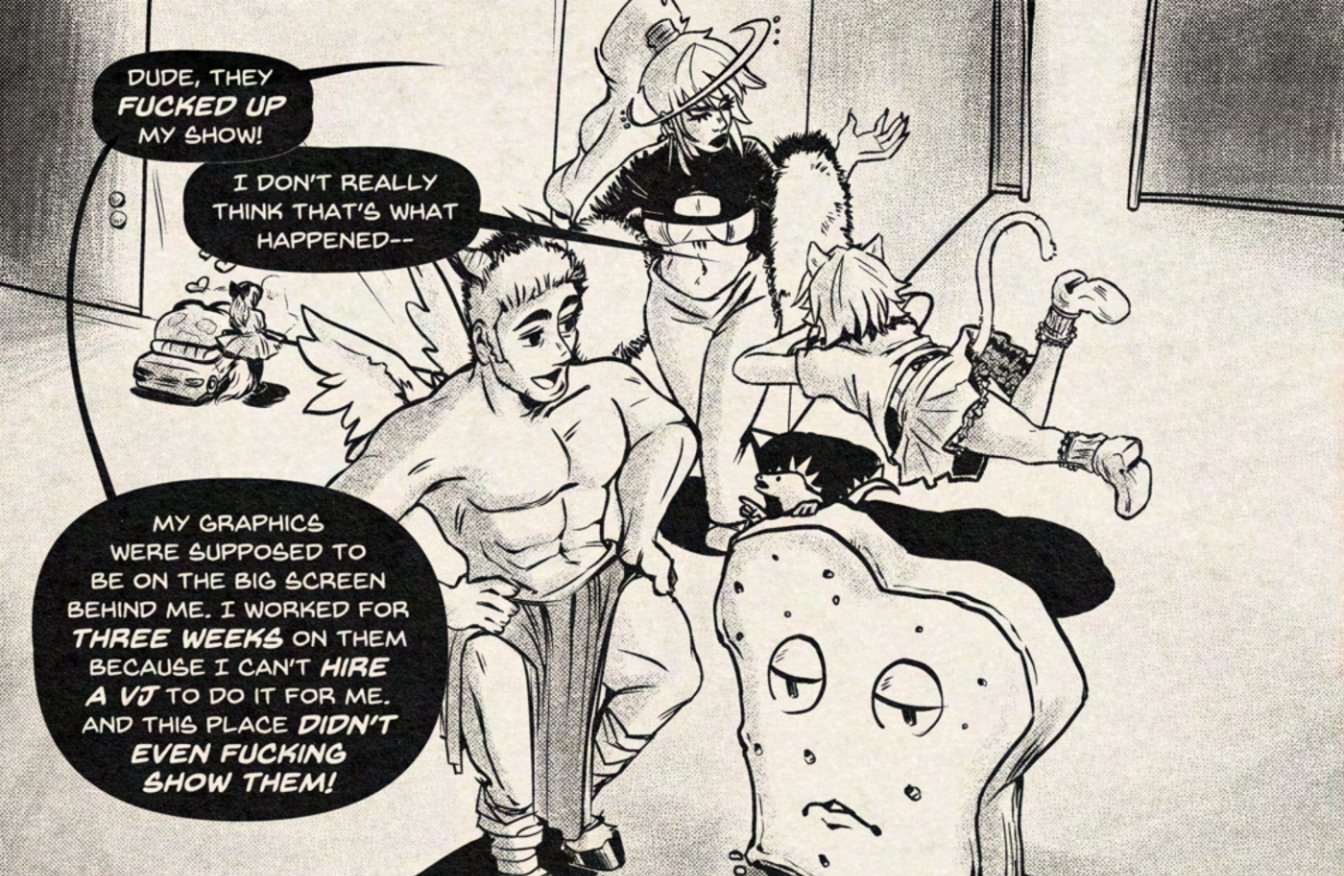
WHEN THINGS ARE GOOD, THEY'RE AMAZING. VIRTUAL REALITY LETS PEOPLE ACCESS LUXURIOUS SPACES WITHOUT PAYING A PREMIUM. STREAMING PERFORMANCES INVITE EVEN MORE PEOPLE IN ON THE FUN.



BUT WHEN IT'S BAD, IT'S AWFUL. PETTY FIGHTS BETWEEN MUSICIANS AREN'T NEW. BUT ONLINE, IT'S A SPECIAL KIND OF HELL.

AND WHERE THERE'S HELL,


THERE ARE DEMONS.



DUDE, THEY
FUCKED UP
MY SHOW!


I DON'T REALLY
THINK THAT'S WHAT
HAPPENED--

MY GRAPHICS
WERE SUPPOSED TO
BE ON THE BIG SCREEN
BEHIND ME. I WORKED FOR
THREE WEEKS ON THEM
BECAUSE I CAN'T **HIRE**
A VT TO DO IT FOR ME.
AND THIS PLACE **DIDN'T**
EVEN FUCKING
SHOW THEM!

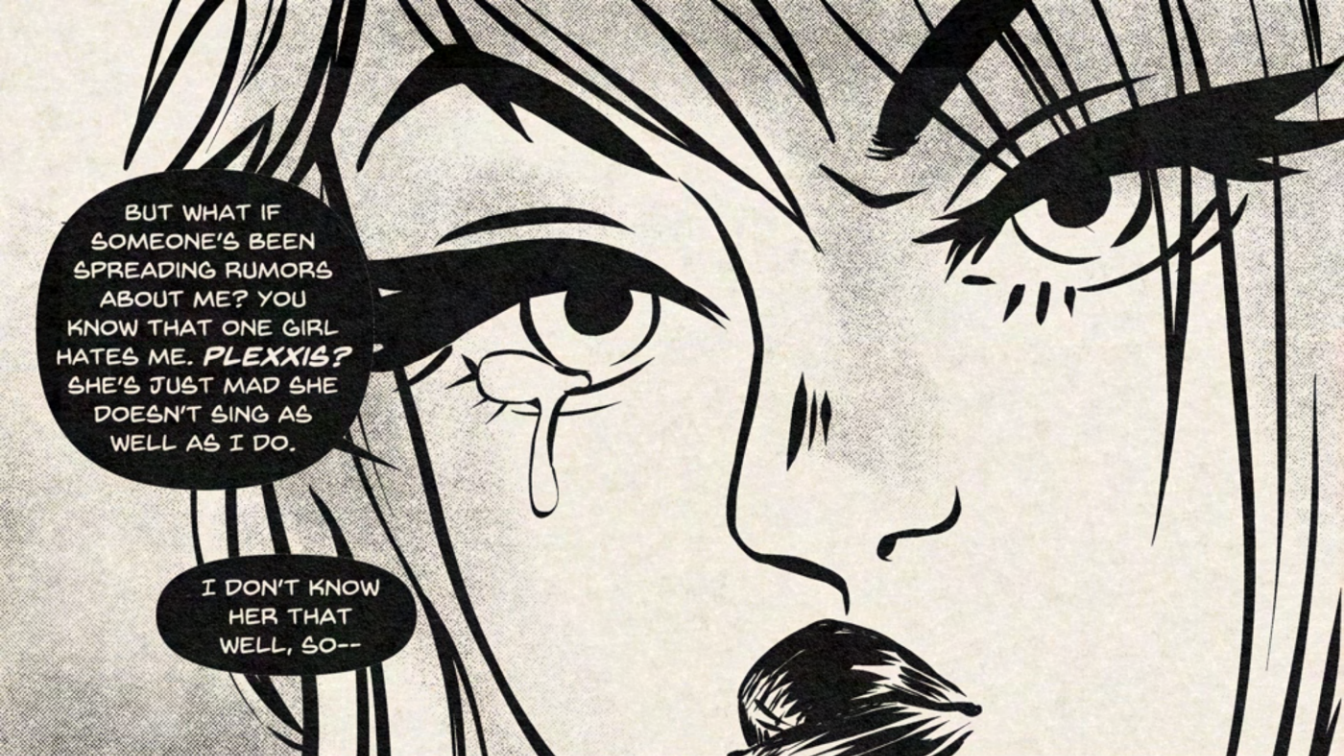


...MINA, I CAN TRY
TO TALK TO THE CLUB
OWNERS ABOUT THIS,
BUT I'M PRETTY SURE
IT WAS A MISTAKE.

IT'S NOT A
MISTAKE. THEY
JUST DON'T
LIKE ME.




YOU SAID THIS ABOUT
THE **LAST** CLUB YOU
PLAYED AT, AND NOW
YOU AREN'T WELCOME
THERE ANYMORE. THAT'S
ALL I WANT TO POINT OUT.
THERE ARE SO MANY
MUSICIANS HERE, I
DON'T THINK A CLUB
THAT **BARELY KNOWS**
YOU HAS TIME TO
BEEF WITH YOU.




BUT WHAT IF
SOMEONE'S BEEN
SPREADING RUMORS
ABOUT ME? YOU
KNOW THAT ONE GIRL
HATES ME. *PLEXXIS?*
SHE'S JUST MAD SHE
DOESN'T SING AS
WELL AS I DO.

I DON'T KNOW
HER THAT
WELL, SO--




WASN'T SHE TAGGING
YOU IN A POST
THE OTHER DAY?

I MEAN...



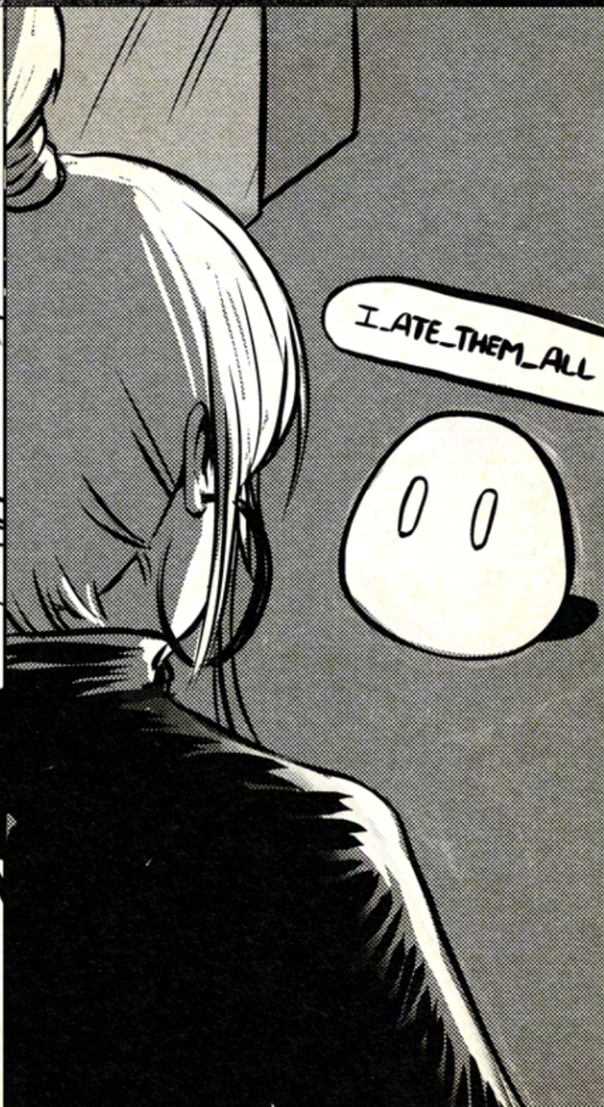
MINA, I'M REALLY
WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
YOU'RE TALENTED.
YOU DON'T NEED TO
GET WRAPPED UP IN
STUFF LIKE THIS.
JUST GET A STAGE
WHEN THERE'S AN
OPEN MIC AND LET
PEOPLE LOVE YOU.



LIKE I HAVEN'T
BEEN TRYING.

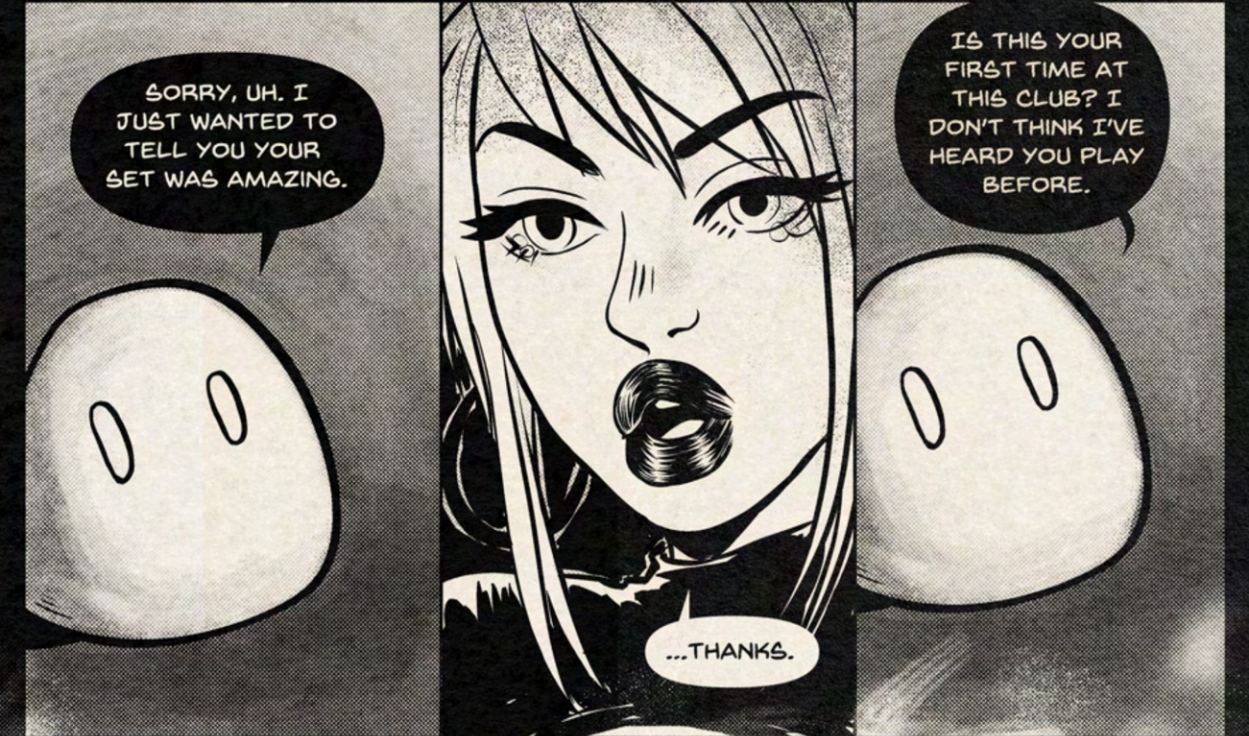


I THINK YOU'RE
THE BEST SINGER
HERE, HONESTLY.



I_ATE_THEM_ALL





SORRY, UH. I
JUST WANTED TO
TELL YOU YOUR
SET WAS AMAZING.

IS THIS YOUR
FIRST TIME AT
THIS CLUB? I
DON'T THINK I'VE
HEARD YOU PLAY
BEFORE.

...THANKS.

I'M JUST TIRED
OF HAVING TO **PROVE**
MYSELF TO EVERYONE.
YOU KNOW?

I GET YOU. YOU
WANT TO STICK
OUT IN A SEA OF
MUSICIANS WHO ARE
ALL TRYING TO GET
TO THE VERY TOP
OF A GAME OF...
A VIDEO GAME.

IT'S NOT JUST THAT.
I'M A **VTUBER**, AND
MY SINGING TIES IN
WITH MY STREAMING
CHANNEL. IT KIND OF
ALL WORKS TOGETHER
AS AN ENTERTAINMENT
CONCEPT. I'D LOVE TO
GET SIGNED WITH A BIG
VTUBING AGENCY THAT
CAN PUT ME IN FRONT
OF A TON OF PEOPLE.

YOU EVER TRY
MANIFESTING
WHAT YOU WANT
TO HELP MAKE
THAT HAPPEN?

HUH?

MANIFESTATION. YOU KNOW. YOU GATHER SOME CRYSTALS, YOU WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU WANT, YOU MANIFEST IT. YOU ASK THE UNIVERSE TO BRING IT TO YOU.

PFFT. I DON'T BELIEVE IT.

I HAVE A FEW CRYSTALS BUT I'VE NEVER DONE THAT.

I'VE DONE IT A COUPLE TIMES AND IT ACTUALLY WORKS GREAT. YOU NEED TO FOCUS ON WHAT YOU WANT. DON'T FORGET TO ACTUALLY WORK TOWARDS IT, TOO. LAST TIME I TRIED IT, I WAS APPLYING FOR A JOB. I MAKE PRETTY GOOD MONEY NOW.

OKAY, YOU DON'T BELIEVE IT, BUT LET ME GIVE IT A SHOT. I'LL SET UP A MANIFESTATION THING FOR YOU. TOTALLY FREE.

ISN'T THAT JUST A SPELL THOUGH?

IT *WOULD* BE IF I WERE PETITIONING A **GOD**. I'M JUST PUTTING IT OUT THERE THAT IF MY NEW FRIEND MINA WANTS TO BE A **SUPERSTAR VTUBER** WITH MILLIONS OF FANS, THAT IT WOULD BE REALLY COOL.

WAIT--WAIT, I'M NOT SURE I WANT THAT YET. LET'S JUST START WITH... I WANT TO BE BETTER THAN **PLEXXIS**. I WANT TO GET TO THE POINT THAT PEOPLE PAY ATTENTION TO MY TALENT MORE THAN HERS. MORE FANS, MORE STREAMS THAN HERS.

DONE.

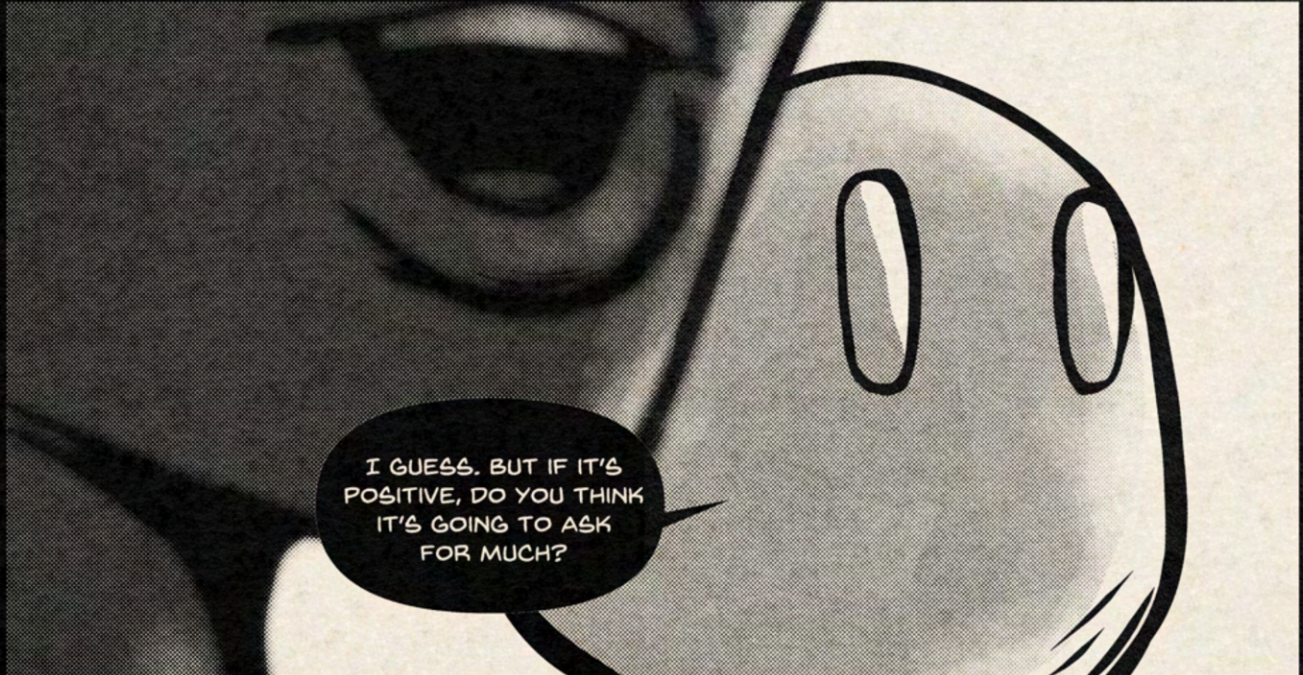


JUST LIKE
THAT?

JUST LIKE THAT.
EASY, RIGHT? YOU
JUST GOTTA KNOW
WHAT TO ASK FOR.



DOESN'T THE
UNIVERSE EVER
ASK FOR
ANYTHING BACK?



I GUESS. BUT IF IT'S
POSITIVE, DO YOU THINK
IT'S GOING TO ASK
FOR MUCH?



I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...

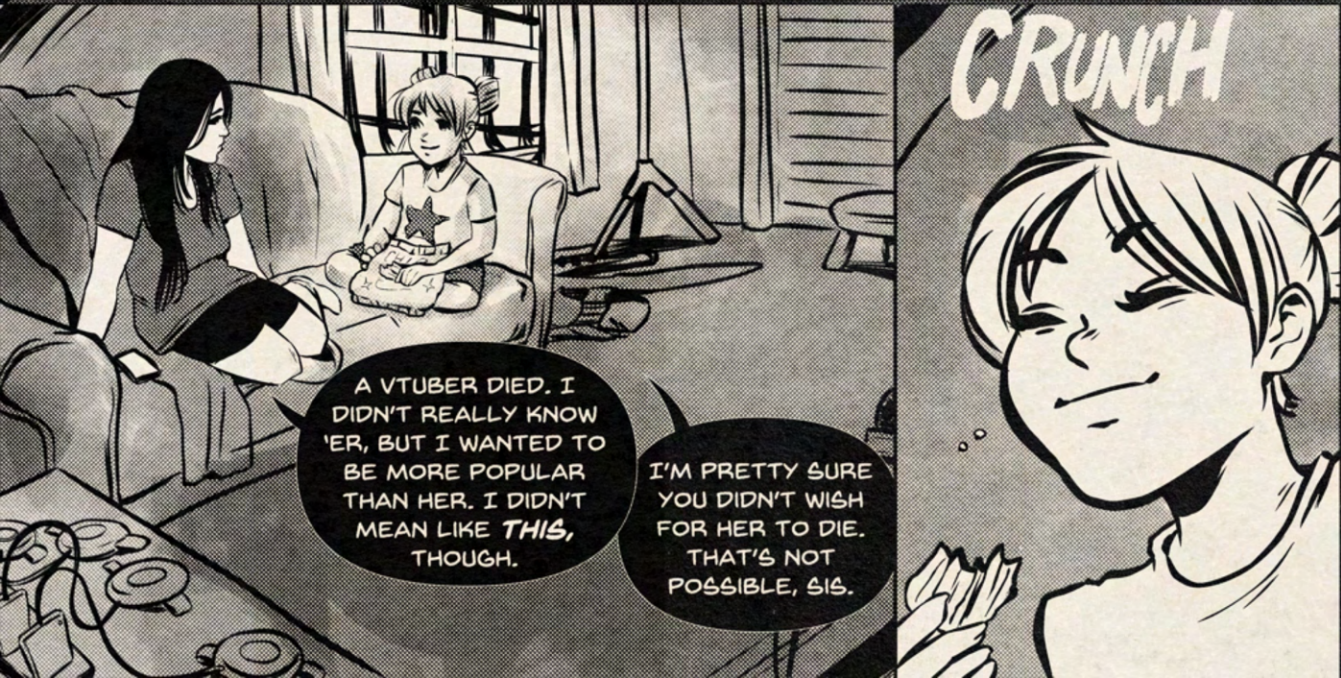
The last photo taken of Plexxis. This is so hard and I keep crying but I know even tho she and I were like in two shows to and in the same discor that we were best friends so I wanted to collab on some new music so keep rooting for me and I'll make it to the top PLEXXISTTV RIP KEEPITPLUR

thatoneVR0ID 39m
omg she died

loldude95 28m
nah this fake

thatoneVR0ID 27m
I find dudes like you I ain't gonna lie this

HEY, WANT SOME? WHAT'S WRONG?



A VTUBER DIED. I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW HER, BUT I WANTED TO BE MORE POPULAR THAN HER. I DIDN'T MEAN LIKE THIS, THOUGH.

I'M PRETTY SURE YOU DIDN'T WISH FOR HER TO DIE. THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE, SIS.

CRUNCH

RENT GOAL: \$1600/2400

LAST SONG,
EVERYBODY!
THANKS FOR
COMING
OUT!

TOP DONOR: BIG

DISCLAIMER donated +2
EB0V3000: this dude donated?
BIGMAN: and? at least i dont
sit around broke as fuck look!
I FIND A: OH HERE WE GO AGAIN
WJOBEBTERS: HATING OMENGE
EB0V3000: I just think if you was
doing as u shouldnt be in a show
IT ENJOI: Oh... You could MIND THE
BUSINESS, AND STOP BEING NEERAY
Automated: The channel has not
been set to super: be r-only. Ple
join for \$15.00/mo to enjoy mem
Puppygfrl: haha
Puppygfrl: plays

I_ATE_THEM_ALL
[LOADING AVATAR...]

HEY! HOW'S
IT BEEN? NICE
AVATAR.

POP!

AW,
THANKS!
WAS TIRED
OF BEING
SHORT. WHAT'S
NEW?

HAVE YOU
CONSIDERED
THAT METHOD
I MENTIONED
BEFORE?

NOT MUCH.
MORE VIEWERS,
MORE WORK. MORE
PERFORMANCES.
NOT SEEING TOO
MUCH DIFFERENCE
IN PAYOUT,
THOUGH.

THE LAST
TIME I TRIED
THAT, SOMEONE
DIED.

NUMBER ONE, THAT'S NOT
HOW MANIFESTATION WORKS.
YOU DON'T ASK THE UNIVERSE
FOR THINGS AND THEN PEOPLE
DIE AS A PRICE FOR IT. NUMBER
TWO, YOU *DID* GET WHAT YOU
WANTED, EVEN IF THAT MEANS
YOU DON'T GET MUCH
MONEY FOR IT.

SO?

SO, TRY AGAIN.
ASK FOR MONEY
THIS TIME,
NOT FAME.

DON'T THE
TWO GO
TOGETHER?

NOT ALWAYS. THERE
ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE
RICH AND UNKNOWN, AND
THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO
ARE FAMOUS AND BROKE.

IF YOU HAVE
DEDICATED VIEWERS
WITH DEEP POCKETS,
YOU CAN SUSTAIN YOUR
STREAMING CAREER
FOR **LONGER**, RIGHT?

DONE.

ALRIGHT, FINE.
I WANT TO ASK
THE UNIVERSE FOR
MORE MONEY. I
WANNA BE A
WEALTHY
STREAMER.

WHY DO YOU
WAYS STARE
LIKE

HEY! GREAT
SHOW. BY THE
WAY, A BUNCH
PEOPLE WANNA
BOOK YOU. AND
SOME OF THESE
CLUBS **PAY**.

REALLY?
...OH, THIS IS
ATE, BY THE
WAY. ATE, THIS
IS MY FRIEND
GERM.

...HI.

HELLO.

LATER.

THERE'S
SOMETHING
OFF ABOUT THAT
CATGIRL THAT WAS
AT YOUR SET. I
DON'T KNOW WHAT
IT IS. REALLY
WEIRD VIBE.

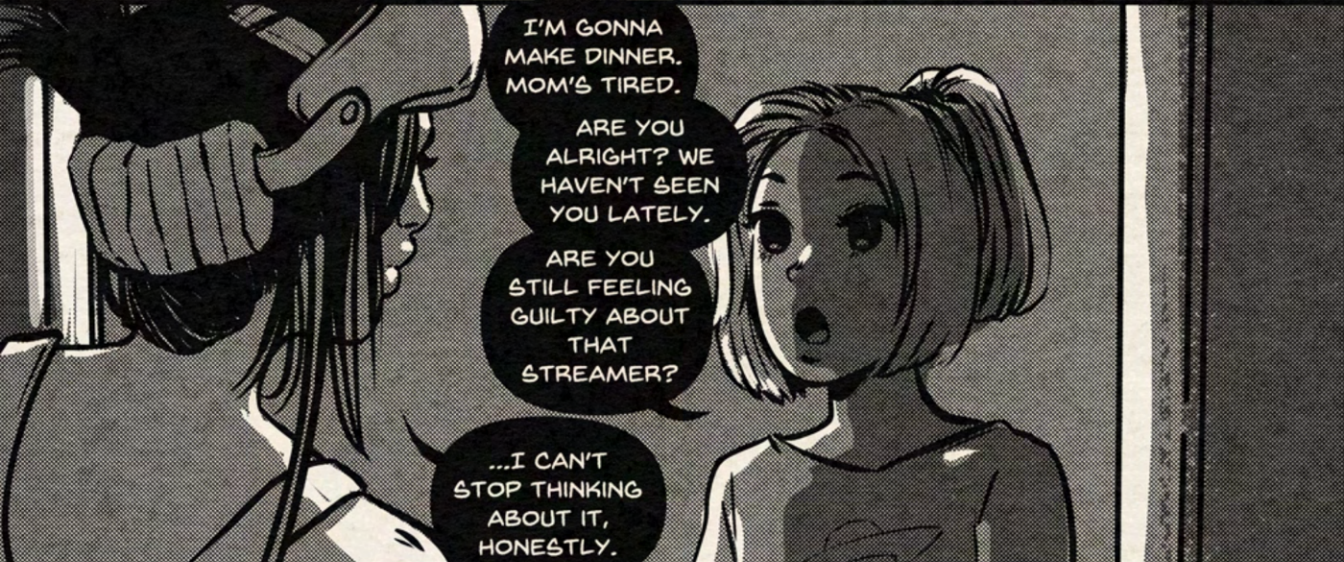
IT'S VR.
EVERYONE'S WEIRD
HERE, HONESTLY.
ANYWAY, DO YOU
WANNA DO A
MEETUP AND
WE'LL TALK ABOUT
BOOKING STUFF?

...YEAH, I'LL
LET YOU KNOW
AFTER WORK. I
HAVE A LATE SHIFT
I GOTTA GET
TO IN LIKE HALF
AN HOUR.

ALRIGHT!
LOVE YOU
BABE.



KNOCK
KNOCK

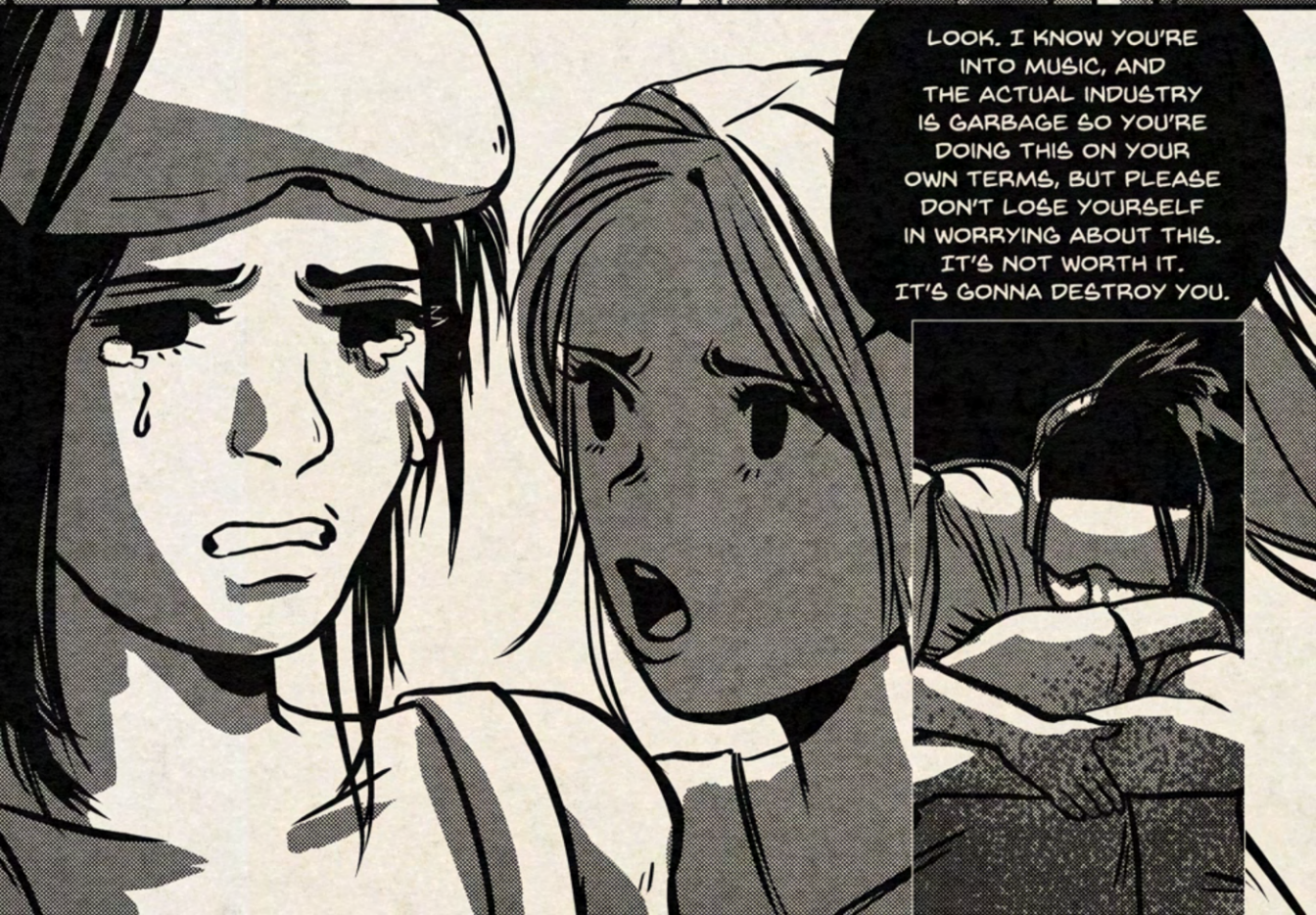


I'M GONNA
MAKE DINNER.
MOM'S TIRED.

ARE YOU
ALRIGHT? WE
HAVEN'T SEEN
YOU LATELY.

ARE YOU
STILL FEELING
GUILTY ABOUT
THAT
STREAMER?

...I CAN'T
STOP THINKING
ABOUT IT,
HONESTLY.



LOOK. I KNOW YOU'RE
INTO MUSIC, AND
THE ACTUAL INDUSTRY
IS GARBAGE SO YOU'RE
DOING THIS ON YOUR
OWN TERMS, BUT PLEASE
DON'T LOSE YOURSELF
IN WORRYING ABOUT THIS.
IT'S NOT WORTH IT.
IT'S GONNA DESTROY YOU.

WHERE THE HELL *IS* HE?

YOUR BOOKING GUY? PROBABLY BUSY.

HE'S MY SERVER MANAGER AND MY BEST FRIEND. I HAVE NEVER GONE A WEEK WITHOUT HEARING FROM HIM BEFORE.

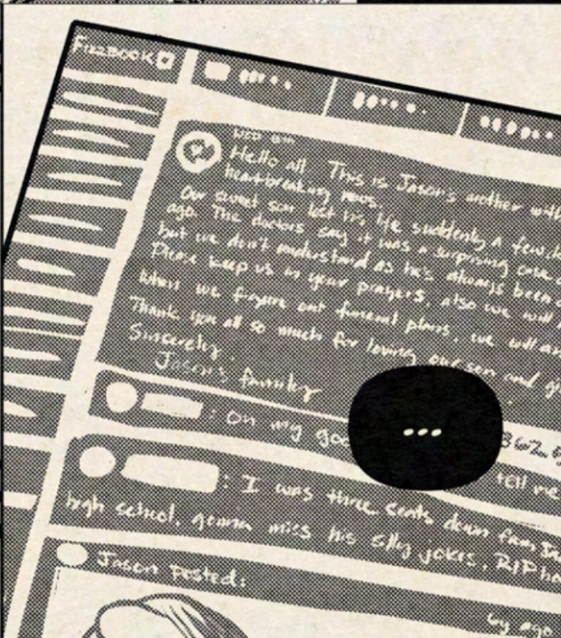
MAYBE HE GOT A GIRLFRIEND.

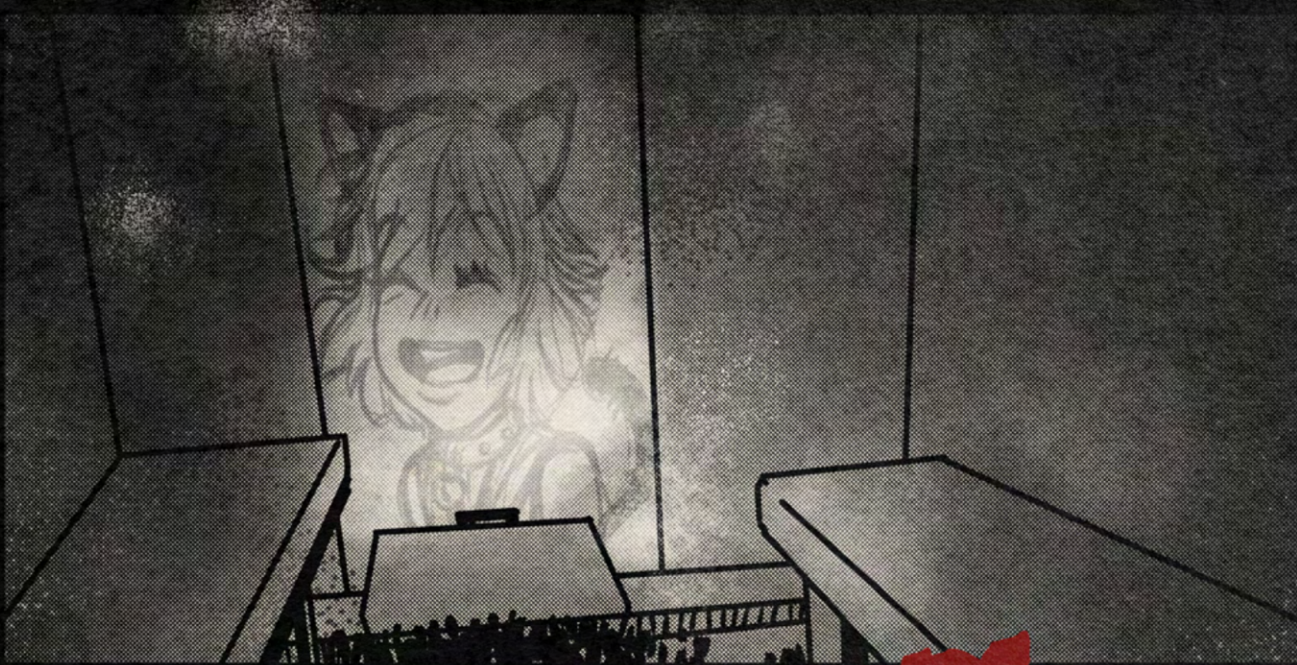
HE'S GAY.



OH RIGHT! HEY I SAW YOU'RE GETTING MORE TIPS

MAYBE HIS AUNT DIED OR SOMETHING AND HE POSTED ABOUT IT.







I FINALLY AM COMFORTABLE
ENOUGH DOING THIS THAT I
CAN STREAM FULL-TIME.



IT WAS A SCARY DECISION, BUT
MY BEST FRIEND GERM ALWAYS
BELIEVED I COULD DO THIS.



I'VE GOTTA TRY FOR HIM.



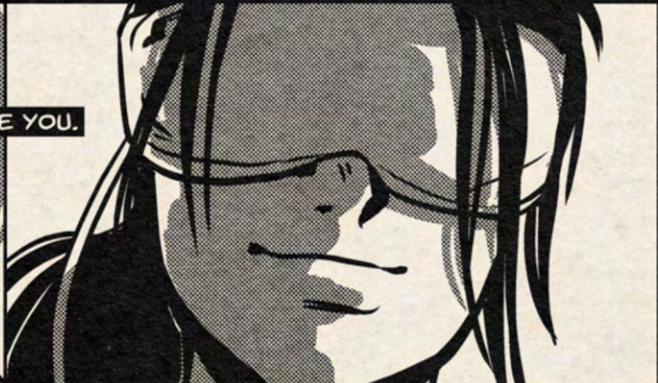
AND I NEED TO TRY FOR
ME, MOST OF ALL. I KNOW
I CAN MAKE IT.

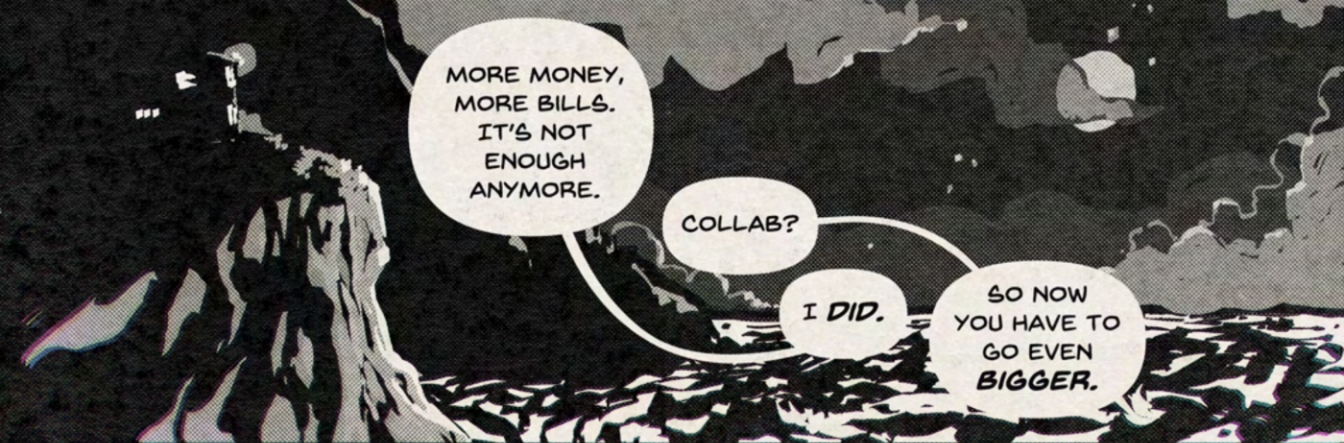


THANK YOU ALL FOR SUPPORTING
ME, SO MUCH.



I LOVE YOU.



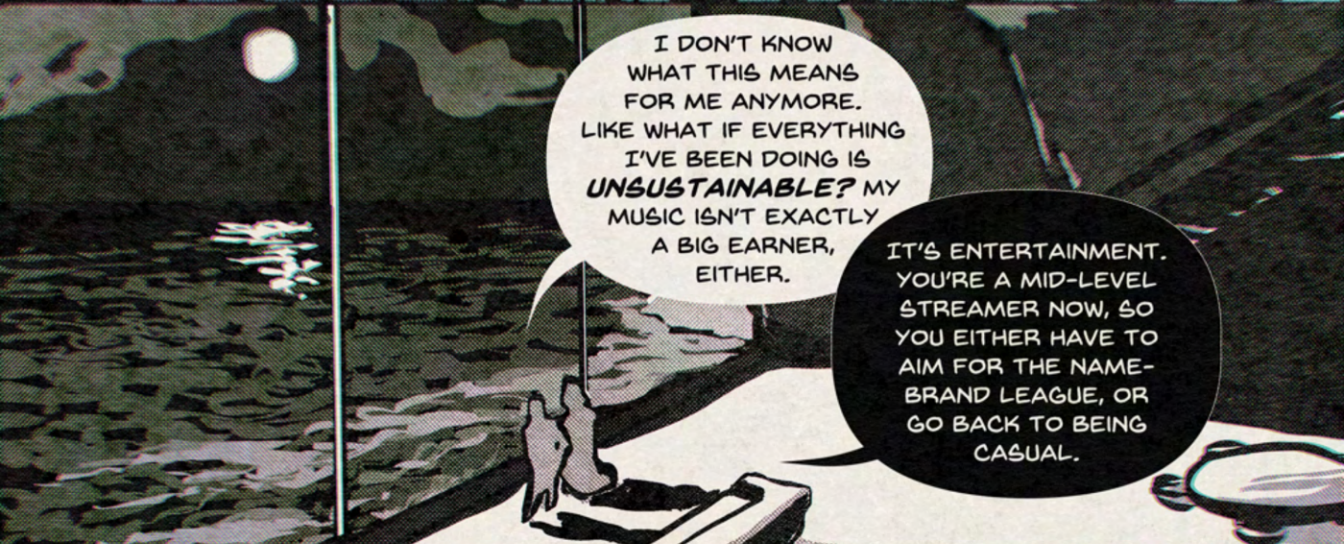


MORE MONEY,
MORE BILLS.
IT'S NOT
ENOUGH
ANYMORE.

COLLAB?


I DID.

SO NOW
YOU HAVE TO
GO EVEN
BIGGER.




I DON'T KNOW
WHAT THIS MEANS
FOR ME ANYMORE.
LIKE WHAT IF EVERYTHING
I'VE BEEN DOING IS
UNSUSTAINABLE? MY
MUSIC ISN'T EXACTLY
A BIG EARNER,
EITHER.

IT'S ENTERTAINMENT.
YOU'RE A MID-LEVEL
STREAMER NOW, SO
YOU EITHER HAVE TO
AIM FOR THE NAME-
BRAND LEAGUE, OR
GO BACK TO BEING
CASUAL.



YOU'VE PUT IN
SO MUCH WORK,
RIGHT? JUST ONE
MORE PUSH.
IF YOU GET SIGNED,
THAT'S IT. YOU'LL
BE A STAR.

I **NEED**
THAT AGENCY
NOW.



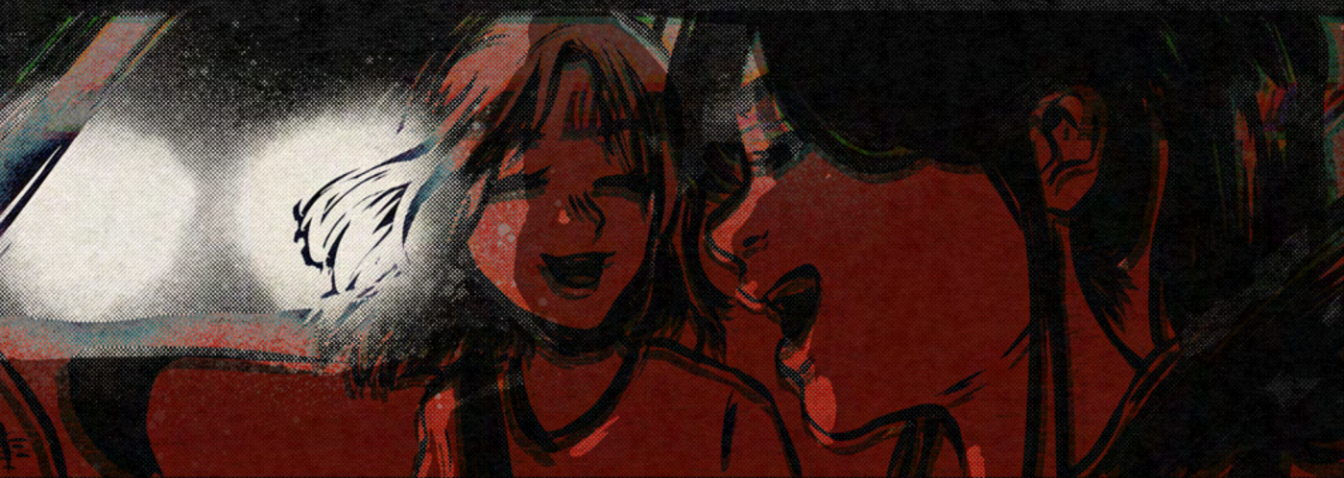
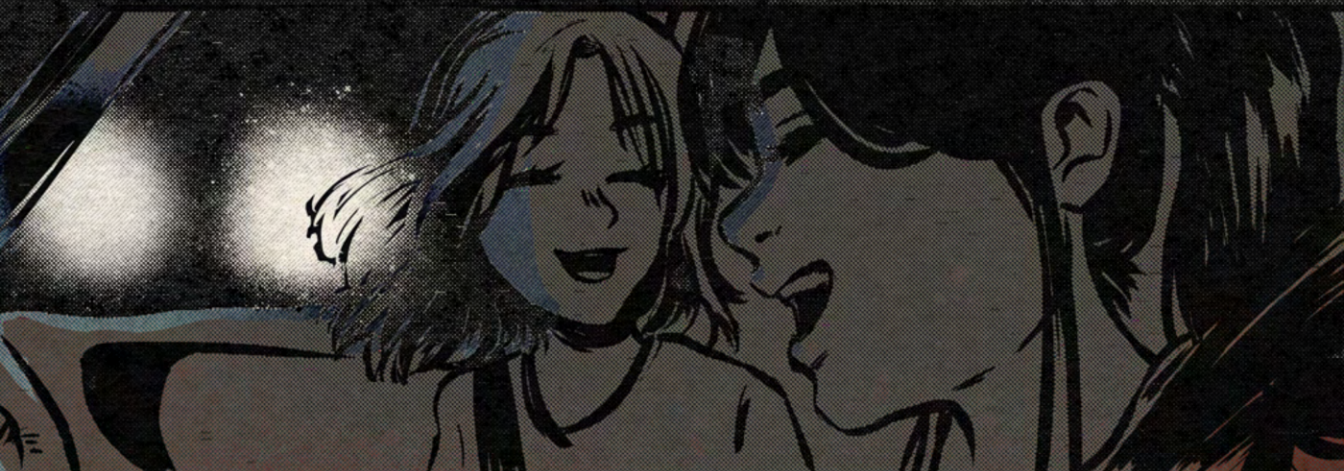
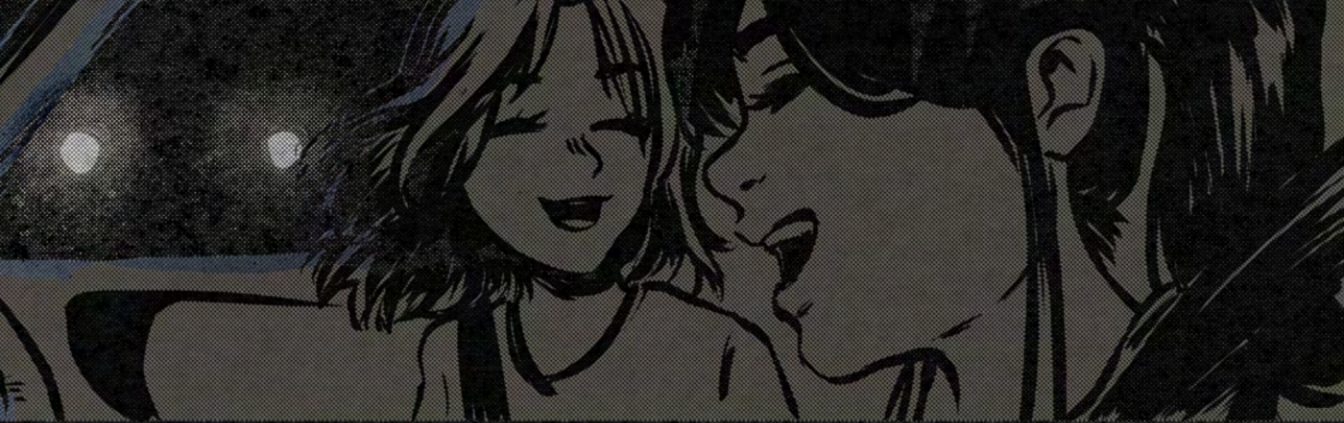
THIRD
TIME'S THE
CHARM.

DOXXORTO 57m
New VIRTUAL STREAMER
TEAM SIGNED, INCLUDING
SEVERAL SINGING PERSONALITIES
—TAKE A LOOK AT WORLDWIDE
HOLLO'S LATEST LINEUP: hmp...

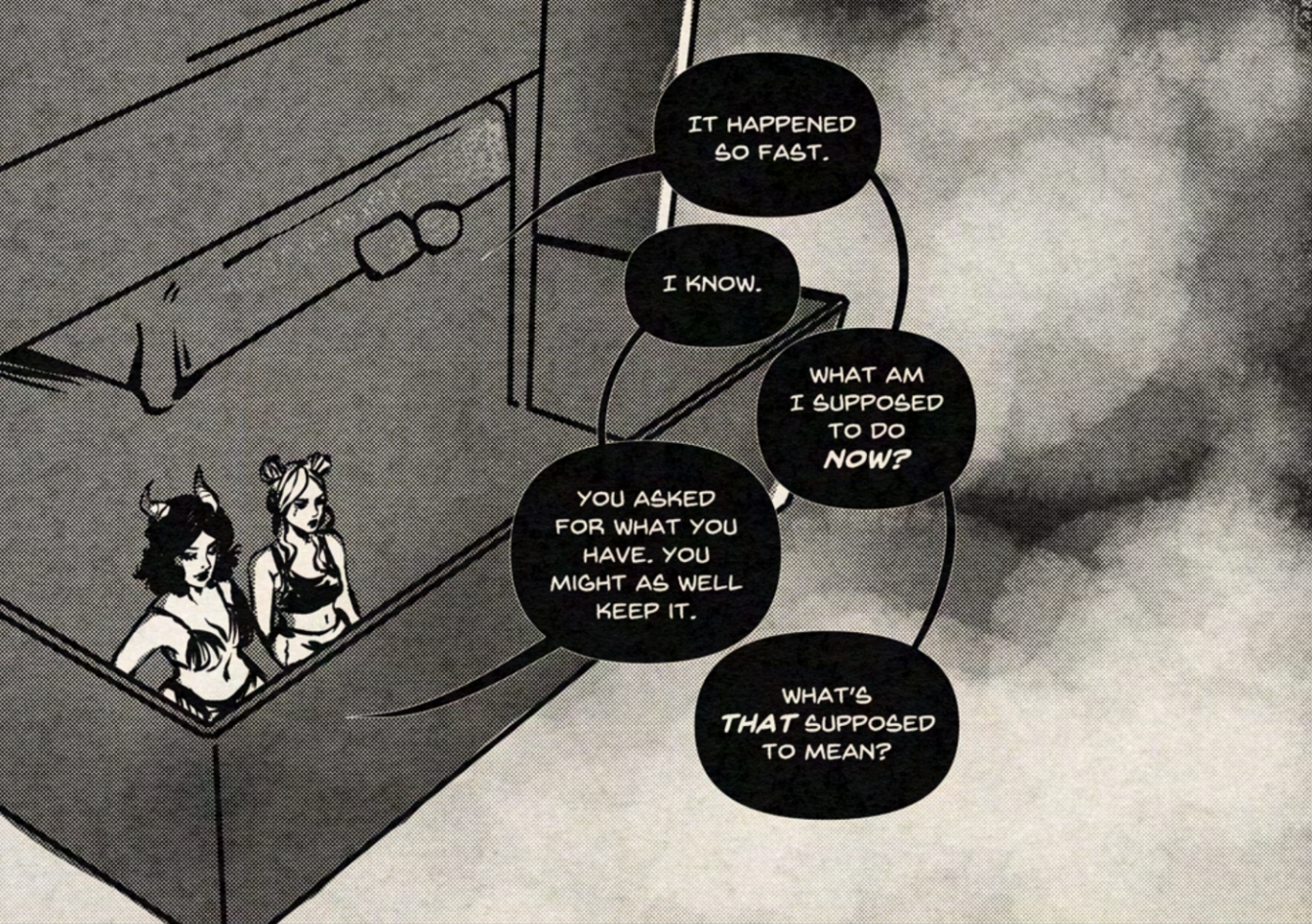


♥ 15.7k 🔋 19.25









LOOK, ALL THAT **MANIFESTING?** YOU WEREN'T MANIFESTING, YOU WERE **WISHING.** YOU WERE SPECIFICALLY MAKING WISHES WITH **ME.** YOU WANTED A SHORTCUT IN YOUR ROAD TO FAME. WHAT DID YOU **THINK** YOU WERE GOING TO PAY FOR IT?



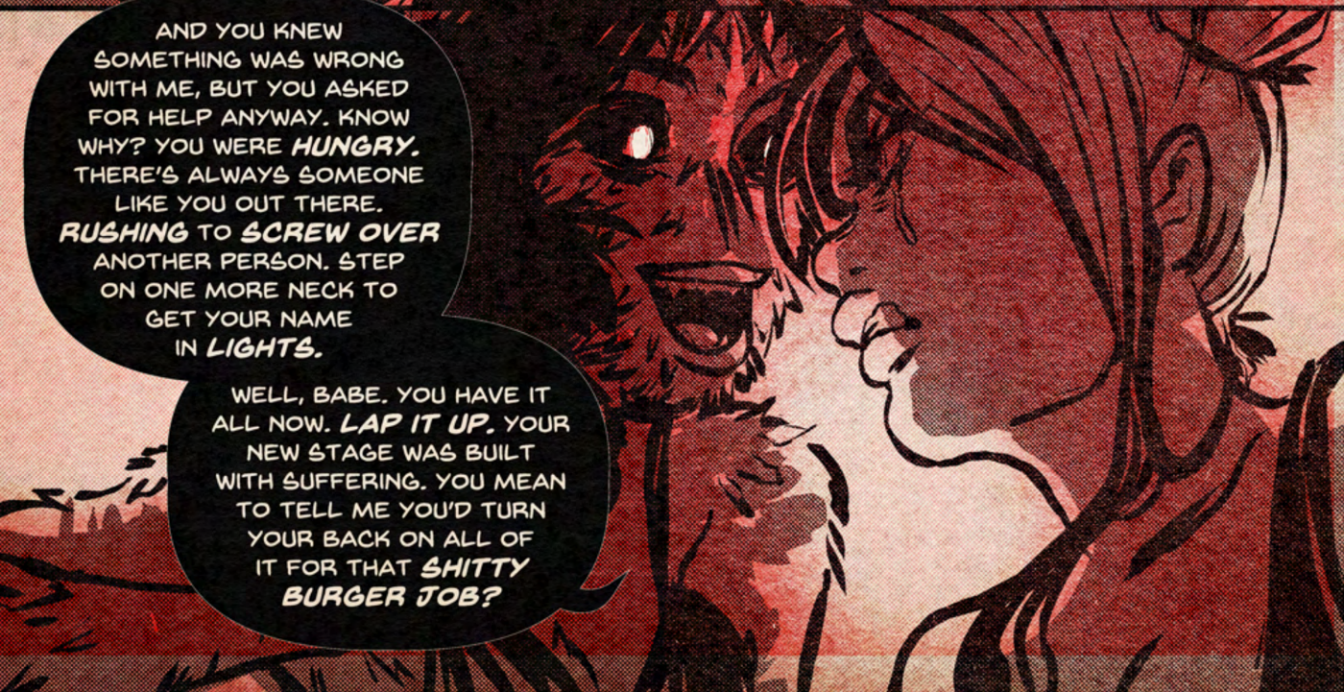
FUCK YOU.




YOU **HUMANS** ALWAYS
GET UPSET AS SOON AS YOU
OBTAIN THE LIFE YOU WANT. YOU
KNOW WHO YOU CAN BLAME FOR
ALL THOSE PEOPLE DYING? **YOU.**
YOU DID THAT. YOU **WISHED** FOR
THEM TO BE GONE. I GAVE YOU
EXACTLY WHAT YOU
ASKED FOR.

AND YOU KNEW
SOMETHING WAS WRONG
WITH ME, BUT YOU ASKED
FOR HELP ANYWAY. KNOW
WHY? YOU WERE **HUNGRY.**
THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE
LIKE YOU OUT THERE.
RUSHING TO SCREW OVER
ANOTHER PERSON. STEP
ON ONE MORE NECK TO
GET YOUR NAME
IN **LIGHTS.**

WELL, BABE. YOU HAVE IT
ALL NOW. **LAP IT UP.** YOUR
NEW STAGE WAS BUILT
WITH SUFFERING. YOU MEAN
TO TELL ME YOU'D TURN
YOUR BACK ON ALL OF
IT FOR THAT **SHITTY**
BURGER JOB?

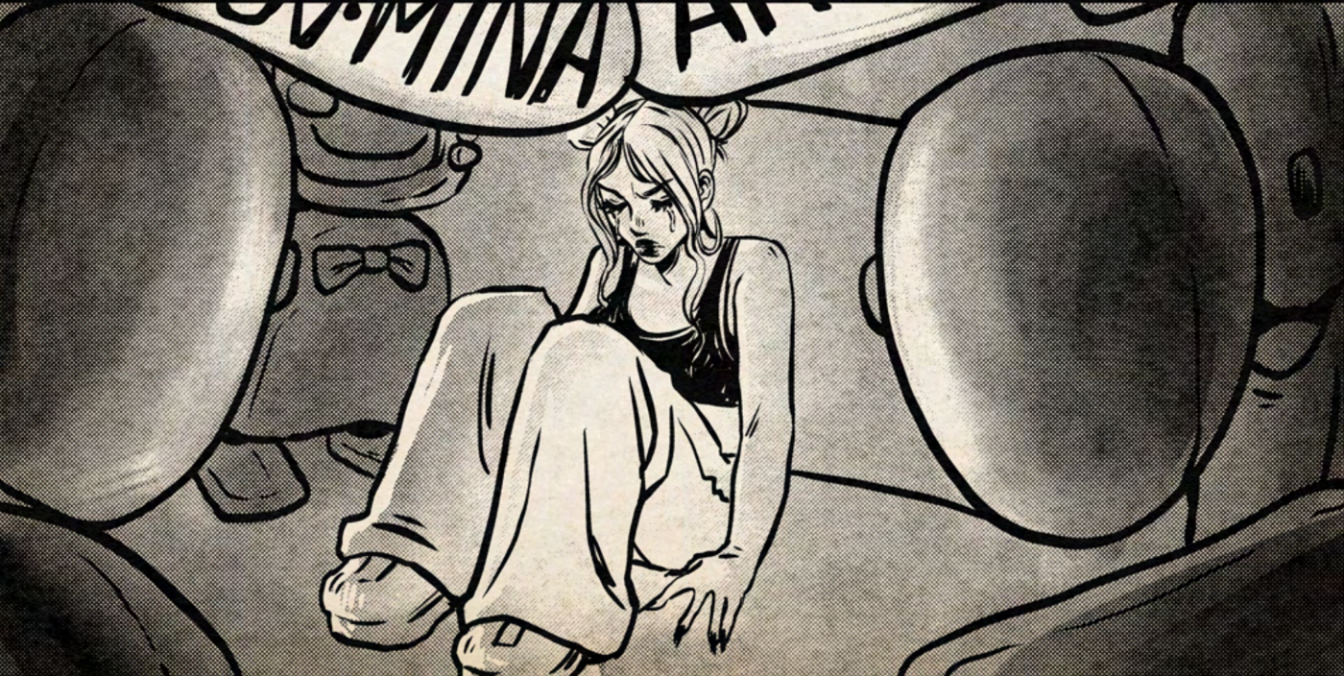
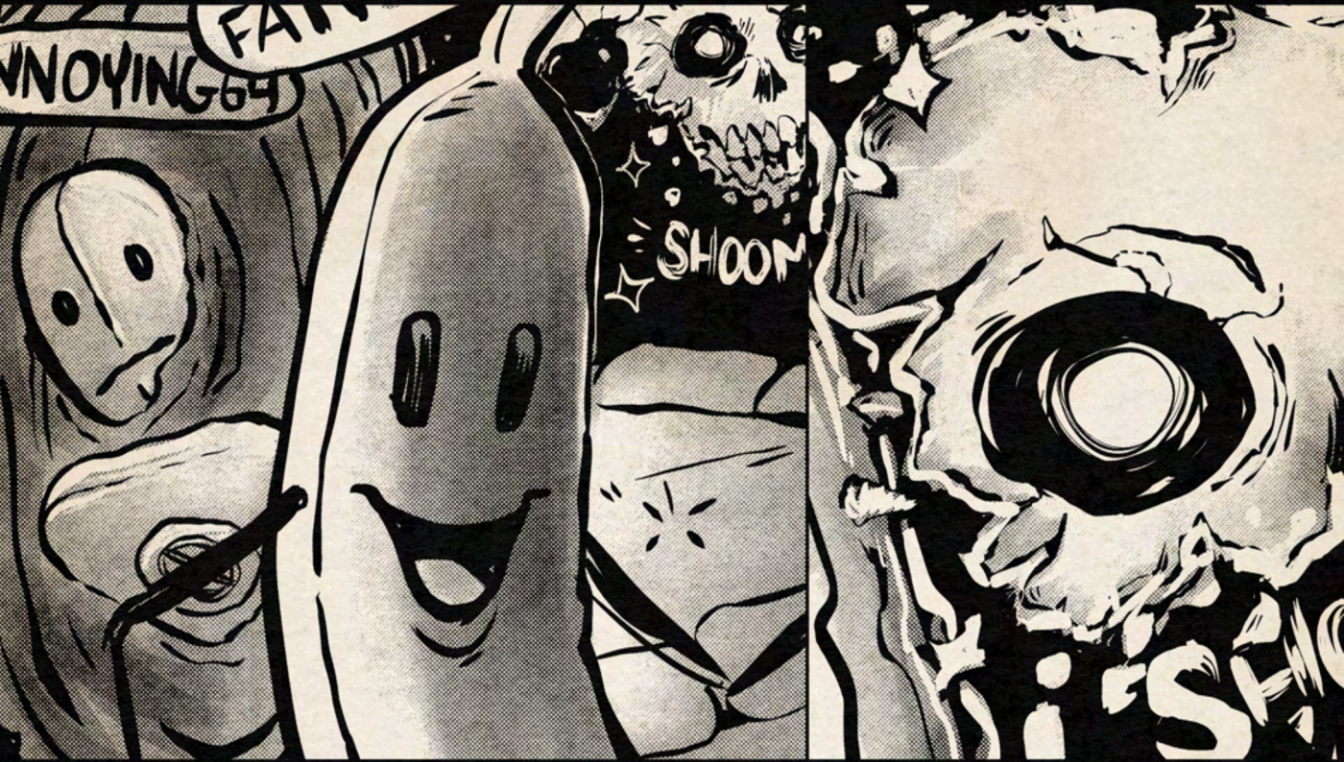




THE WORLD IS
YOURS--**FOR A WHILE.**
THERE IS NO REVERSAL.
SHOULD YOU **REFUSE**
YOUR NEW LIFE, IT
MEANS YOU LOVED
ONES WILL HAVE DIED
FOR NOTHING.

WHY DIDN'T
YOU SKIP ALL THE
THINGS YOU DID AND
POSSESS ME! YOU
WANTED A LIFE--YOU
COULD HAVE JUST
TAKEN MINE!

FAME IS
FOR HUMANS TO
FUSS OVER. IT
MEANS **NOTHING**
IN THE LAND
OF THE
DEAD.





END

KML/23

K. GULLORY IS A WRITER AND ARTIST.

SHE CREATES AR FILTERS, COMICS, ENGAGES IN VR JOURNALISM,
ENJOYS THEATRE, MOVIES, GAMING, AND LOVES TO PAINT.

SHE WRITES ABOUT DIGITAL WORLDS AND TECHNOPHILOSOPHY
AT [THEMETACULTURE.CO](https://themetaculture.co).

SHE ENJOYS PHOTOGRAPHY, COZY GAMING, IMMERSIVE WORLDS,
AND IS A FAN OF THE GAME DARK AND DARKER.

IN FFXIV, SHE STUBBORNLY REMAINS A BARD.

IG / BLUESKY: @KGPAINTS

TIKTOK: @KGPAINTS_



Will you press the button?



You will become an anime girl **BUT** You'll be lesbian

preteen me vs me now

picrew.me/image_maker/43...



7:08 PM · Aug 25, 2020 · Twitter Web App

||| View Tweet activity

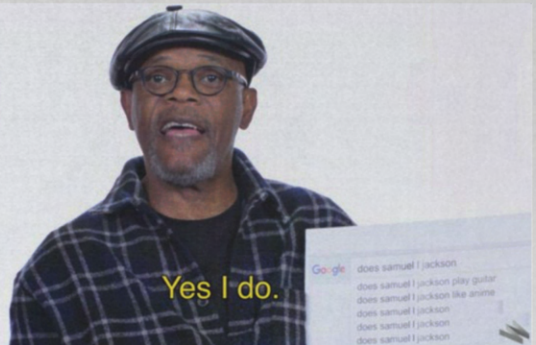
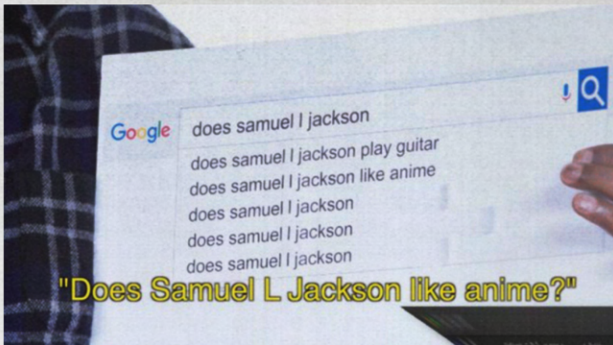
2 Likes



Replying to [redacted] · 39s
howd u grow cat ears



[redacted] · 28s
estrogen



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSVQtIQtxCs>



```
=====
| WELCOME TO
|  `+._  ANIME GENDER      -`-,--@  ))  + - -----
| = an essay
| ====  \\ by radarwhiskers  =====
```

PART 1: ANIME

Legendary animator Hayao Miyazaki is often memed as having said, “anime was a mistake”. While it can be fun to reply with this line or bust it out as a caption for bizarre moments of anime character behavior, the

hard truth is that he did not actually say that, and the actual quote is infinitely cooler. Here's what Hayao Miyazaki actually said:

“You see, whether you can draw like this or not, being able to think up this kind of design, it depends on whether or not you can say to yourself, ‘Oh, yeah, girls like this exist in real life. If you don’t spend time watching real people, you can’t do this, because you’ve never seen it. Some people spend their lives interested only in themselves. Almost all Japanese animation is produced with hardly any basis taken from observing real people, you know. It’s produced by humans who can’t stand looking at other humans. And that’s why the industry is full of otaku!’”

Miyazaki's work is very much grounded in the human experience. While the scenarios of stories like *Spirited Away* are fantastical, they deal with the core to what it means to be a person – growing up and finding uncertainty in your environment, looking for things to hold onto, coming of age and forming connections with others. His criticism here isn't about anime as a whole being irredeemable, but about how many animators and creators have lost sight that the thing they are drawing and creating should be, according to Miyazaki, grounded in human reality. “Anime was a mistake” moments are often extremely over the top expressions of anime-specific tropes and anime-specific character archetypes that have become so intense over time that they no longer mirror human behavior at all. Imagine a “clumsy-type” character stammering beyond belief as they trip over their own feet and spill a tray of drinks in an explosion of off-screen ice cubes and glass, only to cut back to them with the frills under their maid skirt exposed for all to see, as onlookers develop spontaneous nosebleeds or try and protect them from shame, and one dude monologues internally about secretly being super into it. These scenes are baked into the idea not of the regular human experience, but of a different type of experience and pattern of behavior – it's not how a person behaves, it's how the “Anime Character” behaves.

It's only natural when creating art to take inspiration from what came before. If you're an animator, you're likely drawing upon older anime for what you end up making yourself. But do this enough times to the exclusion of other influences, and you end up with a copy of a copy. Miyazaki's work may be based on human lives, human experience, and how humans actually look, but there are those who take inspiration from him, and those who take inspiration from them, and so on, and without going back to the human experience, the initial spark that created storytelling and thus animation in the first place, you end up with characters and stories that are almost unrecognizable as human. A

character type created and codified within anime itself, existing as a separate entity from the human entirely. The Anime Character is no longer a depiction of a real person, but a new type of being in and of itself. Through fiction, an entirely new category of person has been created.

What happens when people identify with these characters? Art imitates life to an extent, but for somebody exposed to enough anime tropes, how does life imitate art – how do these character archetypes come back and influence people in the real world? When a new category of person is brought into existence, what does it mean when people are attracted to these characters, and want to be these characters, to the exclusion of being something else? The purpose of this essay is to argue one thing: that's what gender is. And this is what the creation of a new gender, or collection of genders, looks like.

PART 2: GENDER

In the field of linguistics, “gender” is often much more sensibly called “noun classes”. You have categories that you divide everything up into, and they act differently with respect to grammar. The only reason people associate this with gender as in ‘sex’, is because masculine and feminine are the grammatical genders that many romance languages like Spanish, French, and Italian have. Other languages do grammatical gender differently. Some languages distinguish ‘animate’ vs ‘inanimate’ genders, such as Basque or Georgian. Bantu languages can have some ten to twenty grammatical genders, with different ones being used to refer to humans, various plants and animals, more abstract concepts, and so on. The field of words and concepts, and of people that can exist in a society, is a massive, continuous, ever-changing space. What gender does, rather than being a predetermined, universal, and unchangeable binary of male and female, is just draw lines across that space – dividing it up into regions, neighborhoods, and categories, and giving each category a name and a way it functions in the culture that drew them. Gender Gender, the one people think of when you use the word “gender”, is just another categorization system for dividing people up, in the same way that you can divide people by race, “tall” vs “short”, or their religion. Categories can have massive impacts on society and how it functions, and be fundamental to how people experience and move through the world, or they can be goofy and fun, like dividing people by what their favorite pasta shape is. The difference is that Gender Gender, unlike other person categorization criteria, is the one we use to talk about sexual orientation. You may be

absolutely unwilling to get into a relationship with somebody who doesn't like spaghetti, but it isn't gender, because spaghetti4spaghetti is not what "homosexual" means.

In the opposite direction, if pasta preference became so important to human sexual behavior that people used it as the measuring stick to define what their sexuality is, then "spaghetti-liker": That's a gender, baby. While we use gender to talk about sexuality, sexuality is the force that governs what gender categories exist in the first place. Change the landscape of human sexuality enough, and you can change what genders exist. Orient human sexuality around a brand new kind of target, like anime characters, and you've created a new gender.

PART 3: ANIME ATTRACTION

It's long been known and it's nothing new: people want to fuck, be fucked by, and fuck as anime characters. Self-published (*doujin*) print works have decades upon decades of history, and many of them consist of porn based on existing characters from established franchises. But as anime characters increasingly diverge from real humans in both appearance and behavior, the object of desire also moves away from being human. Starting in the mid-late 2000s, the term 'waifu' (as in "wife") popped into use on anime and otaku-oriented websites like 4chan, referring to a female anime character toward which somebody feels great affection, sexual or romantic. Some people took the concept more seriously than others, and various images have been posted of people having dinner dates with a portrait of their waifu, or of men out in public with large body pillows with their waifu posed suggestively on the front. "3D Pig Disgusting" or '3DPD' came into use as a misogynistic term to describe real women, and preference for "2D women" was elevated as superior, with particular importance often placed on anime women's inability to pass judgment and their perceived sexual purity, versus real women's perceived physical grotesqueness and promiscuity. While the misogynistic aspects of waifu culture can't be ignored, there are also many cases of people finding healing and peace with their waifus – people who claim that their waifu inspires them and has helped them grow, be a better person, and take care of themselves in a way that they didn't before, often due to social difficulties they face in day to day life. On other parts of the internet, typically fanfiction or fan forums, one can find young people, often girls, expressing that they only find themselves attracted to anime boys and not real ones. Maybe it's because they don't know that they're lesbians yet.

Maybe they don't know they're trans yet and do in fact want to be with men – just not as a woman. Maybe they're responding to a sense of fear and vulnerability that can accompany the prospect of dating men as a woman in a male-dominated society. But while these theories might account for some share of the people who claim preference for anime characters, it wouldn't be fair to assume that every single anime-attracted person must be going through some sort of repression or pathology. It feels like taking a massive social phenomenon and trying to handwave and explain it away as an anomaly. After all, enjoying hentai and admitting that you enjoy hentai has become mainstream – just ask Samuel L. Jackson.

Stock anime characters like the clumsy but earnest glasses girl, the mysterious transfer student, and the snarky loli are not real people and don't look or behave remotely like real people do, but people still lust after them because they enjoy the ideas they represent about sexuality. Finally, while people find these characters sexually evocative, there's an age old question it leaves behind that many queer and trans readers will find familiar: “do I want her, or do I want to be her?”. People's sexual targets have become oriented towards anime characters, but that also means people will want to be seen as such by others – to be looked at and treated like the way anime characters are looked at and treated. Don't just wish for the big titty goth gf, *become* the big titty goth gf. Don't just wish for the anime girl, *become* the anime girl.

PART 4: ANIME IDENTITY

Look at any trans meme. Literally any of them. Look at their profile pictures online. It's all anime. Look at the cis “e-girl” – cat ear headphones, sparkle filters, the “ahegao” face – these things come from anime. The femboy, a construction that back in the 2000s was only really used if you were posting nudes on chan boards, was very much based on the idea of the “trap” – a term for a boy in anime who was “disguised” as a girl, which about as many people consider a slur as identify with and want to reclaim it. But the year is 2023, we had a global pandemic, and everybody knows what pegging and femboys are. We live in a post femboy hooters society. People consider specific anime characters to be their primary transition goals, people call themselves femboys in real life, and people *really* like femboys. Striped thigh highs are here to stay. At this point it's more a matter of “what does it mean?” and “well, what do we do now?”

The answer so far, is that real life and the online world are blurring, and people are responding by doing anime gender even harder. Vrchat has opened up new opportunities for people to expand on and engage with anime as gender in an extremely literal way, by physically embodying an anime character directly. The vast majority of vrchat users, regardless of their real life gender, pilot avatars that are anime girls. A very large portion of the community is trans, and many people in vrchat joke about “the pipeline” – how it’s only a matter of time between joining the community and coming out as trans yourself. Avatars unlock the possibility of irl transitioning for people, via the flexibility in embodiment and space for exploration of gender that they unlock. But the mapping isn’t one real life gender to one anime gender, it’s many-to-many. Most people do not make their avatars completely by themselves, instead they use one that somebody else has created or buy a “base” – a model to use as a starting point, before modifying it to suit your own needs. These bases have names like Merino, Hakka, and Grus, and each popular base has a reputation that follows it – affectionate sensual types, weird gremlins up to no good, highly artistic fashionistas. You can be a loli for real in vrchat – be as small as you feel, and move through the world with the childlike wonder that is authentically yourself. There are far more of these archetypes than just male and female. Anime has created them, and people in vrchat are just out there being them every single day.

There’s a level of specificity that’s granted by engaging with anime as gender that real life gender doesn’t grant. You’re not just a man, you’re an anime scientist with long dark hair and glasses that shine and flash opaquely. You’re not just a woman, you’re an anime maid who loves others deeply and is full of resilience and strength. Furies figured this stuff out ages ago – fursona species choice is not arbitrary, but based on the cultural connotations of the animals chosen and what you see or want from them in yourself. Anime fans just caught up, and anime is way bigger.

So where does that leave us?

Well, here’s my recipe for creating a new gender:


- 0) Create a new type of person.
- 1) People wanna fuck it, or be fucked by it.
- 2) People wanna be it.
- 3) Critical mass, recognition by others.

When it comes to anime as gender, society is on step 3. People are already doing it – recognition is just a matter of whether other people can see it. But egirls and femboys already exist in real life, and in vrchat and many online trans communities, people are absolutely tuned in. It's strange, but when I've met people from vrchat in person for the first time, I always get a sense of their avatar in who they are in person, no matter how outlandish. Weird raccoon with a fluorescent blue jack-o-lantern face on a black background with a grim reaper hood and a gigantic tail? Yeah, it makes sense that that person is really into techwear. Shy soft spoken guy with glasses and comfy sweaters? Yeah, that's a short green and white bunny girl. On a more grounded note, if you know that nonbinary people exist, you're much more likely to be able to recognize when someone you meet might be nonbinary. Vrchat and anime gender turn that up to an extremely high level – more genders grant more specificity – people are eager to be seen as they are in a world where the established categories aren't enough.

And if you don't agree with any of this, I leave you with the following thought experiment:

Imagine, if you will, an alternate universe. In this universe, there is no gender binary, but instead a gender 100-ary. Just like our current world, mainstream society considers the gender 100-ary to be completely fixed, determined from birth, and unchangeable. Society is built around these 100 genders, and every member of each gender is expected to dress a certain way, and act a certain way, or be viewed as an outcast and a deviant. Coming of age stories are told, about what it means to move from childhood in that gender into adulthood. Members of this society would have absolutely no problem distinguishing one gender from the other – they're ingrained, entrenched, cultural norms with thousands of years of history teaching people how to recognize them. They could pass somebody on the street and pick out which of the 100 they are almost immediately – or at least after a bit of conversation. And yet, even in a society with so many genders, there would still exist people who feel that none of them are the right fit. When you divide any continuous space into discrete chunks, there will always be people who fall through the cracks. Those people will want something to call themselves. They'll congregate together, and they'll create new modes of understanding about who they themselves are. There are infinitely many ways to divide up a plane – the capacity for human creativity is endless, and through art we can create visions of alternatives.

To a member of a strict gender 100-ary society, a 101st would be unthinkable. **But from our perspective here on earth, is it really that much more?**



VRChat is a platform that forced me to reevaluate how blackness and darker skin is seen. I know that the initial thought is that a game can't force you to do anything but a social game like VRC, where there are zero to no consequences to your actions, will always find a way.

I got back into VRC at the height of the pandemic when I bought a headset. I got so invested that I started to buy avatars. In my avatar search, both free and paid, I found that dark skin was something people have never heard of. It was so rare that I made a tiktok account dedicated to finding BIPOC avatars and avatar creators. Darker skin color options were seen as a tedious task that creators did not want to invest time in. Rather than include it in the package, they would send you a tutorial on how to change skin color in Gimp or leave you to your own devices resulting in a lot of avatars with brown teeth and scleras. Even some black creators were privvy to this phenomenon. And if there were skin options, the darkest choice would be a very light toffee color. And even that was marketed as a bonus feature. As a little plus. As a favor.

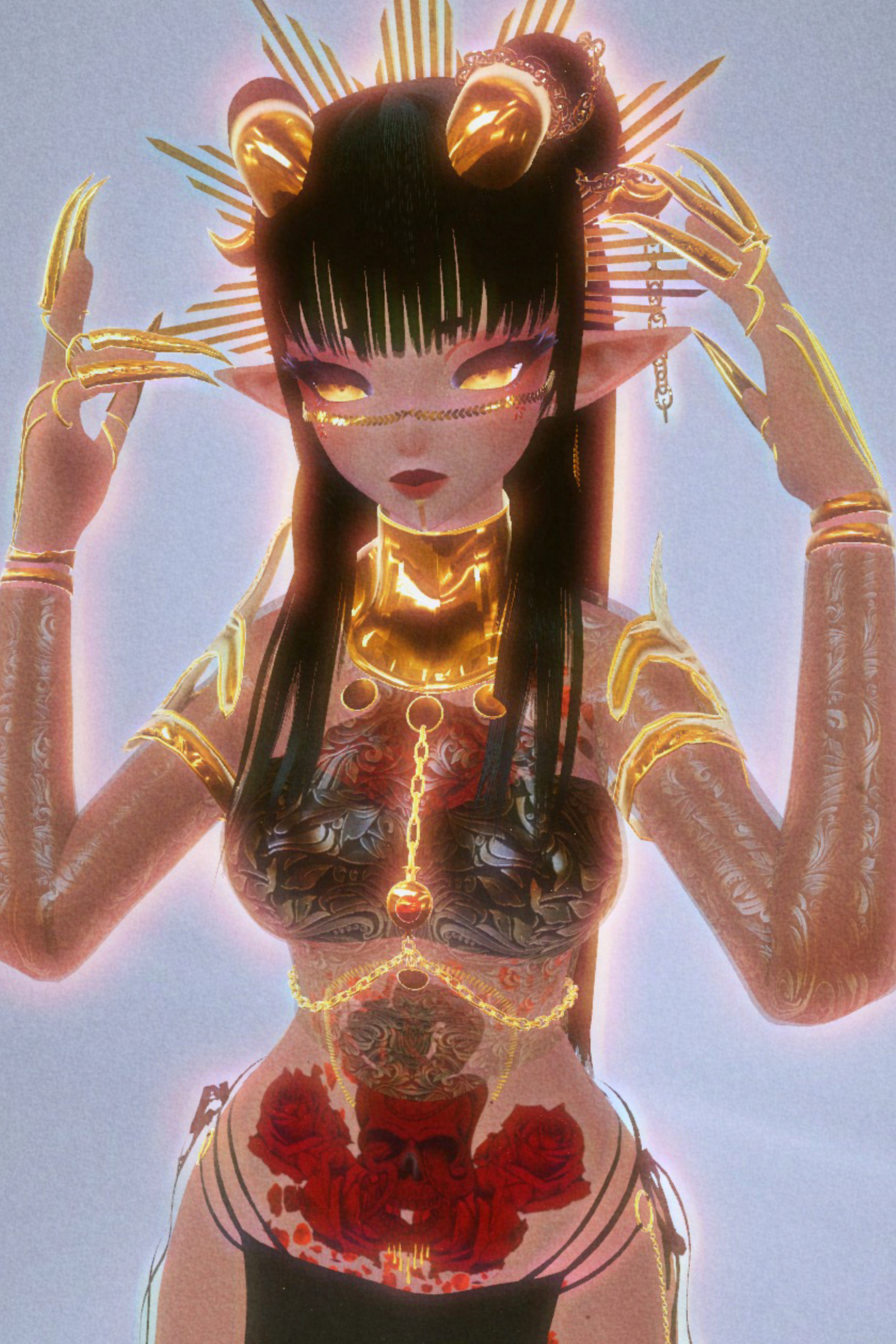
Despite this, seeing users embody black caricatures in their interactions and creations was not uncommon. Assets and avatars that look like they might be for you but weren't, were not uncommon as well. They wanted the culture, the fashion, the mannerisms, but not the people. Facing this reality as a black person in VR was eye opening: That even in a reality where the systems against us don't exist or were blurred, people will still treat us as the "other". So I decided to start creating with BIPOC specifically black people in mind.

It was difficult. As with any institution built off of white supremacy and individualism, those at the top gatekept as much information as possible. If you didn't know someone who could personally teach you, you were left with very little tutorials online and the power of "Trial and Error". So I just started creating. I started with kitbashing in VROID to kitbashing in Blender and Unity to making my own assets from scratch. I started making assets and avatars for BIPOC. I even made charity-dedicated avatars and released assets for free. I still do.

People are people. No matter what reality you put them in, they will hold on to their convictions and set the societal standards around you. As a black woman, the best thing I can do in that or any environment is create. Create safe spaces for people like me and create things for people like me. That's all I can really do.

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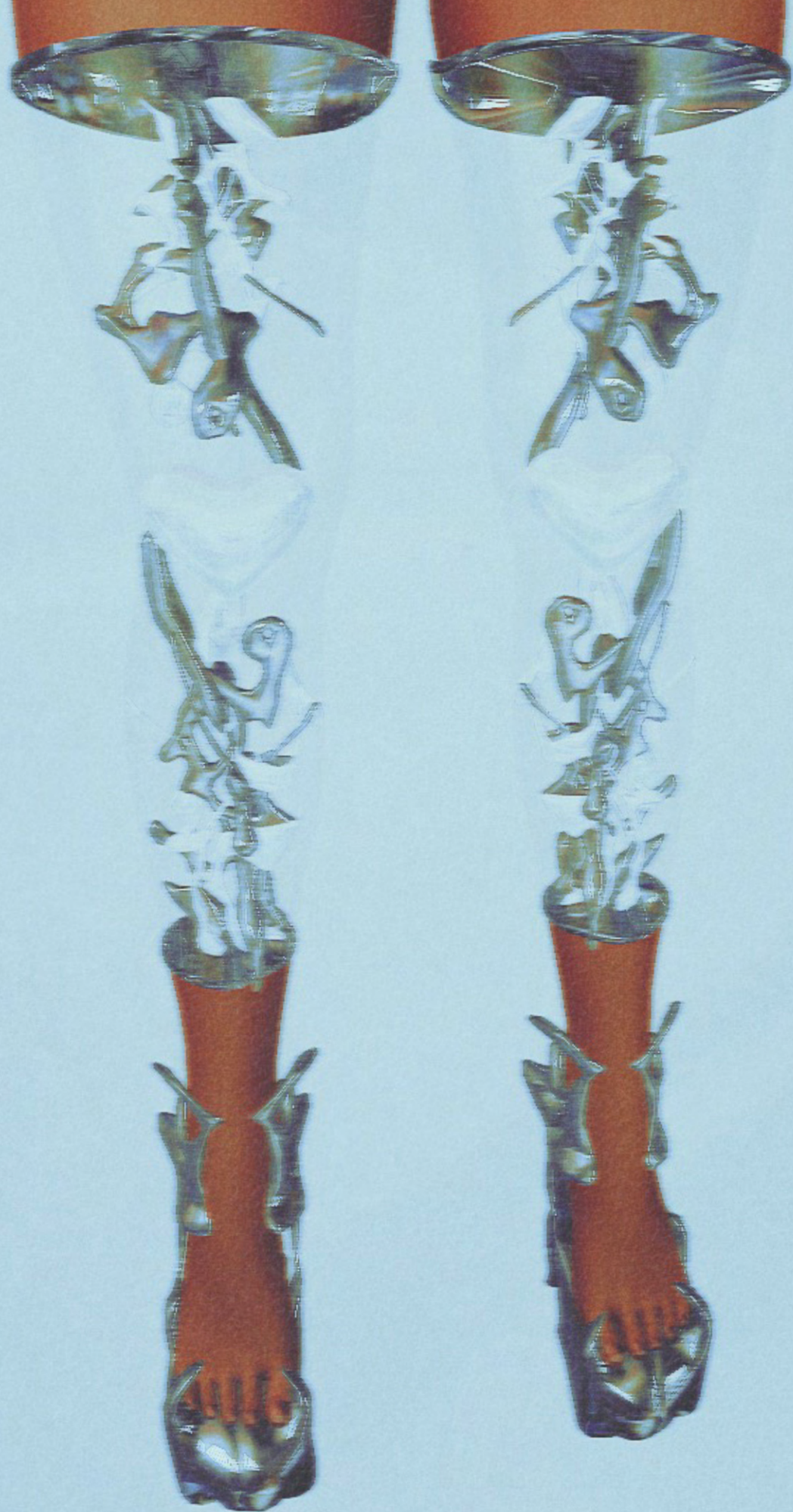






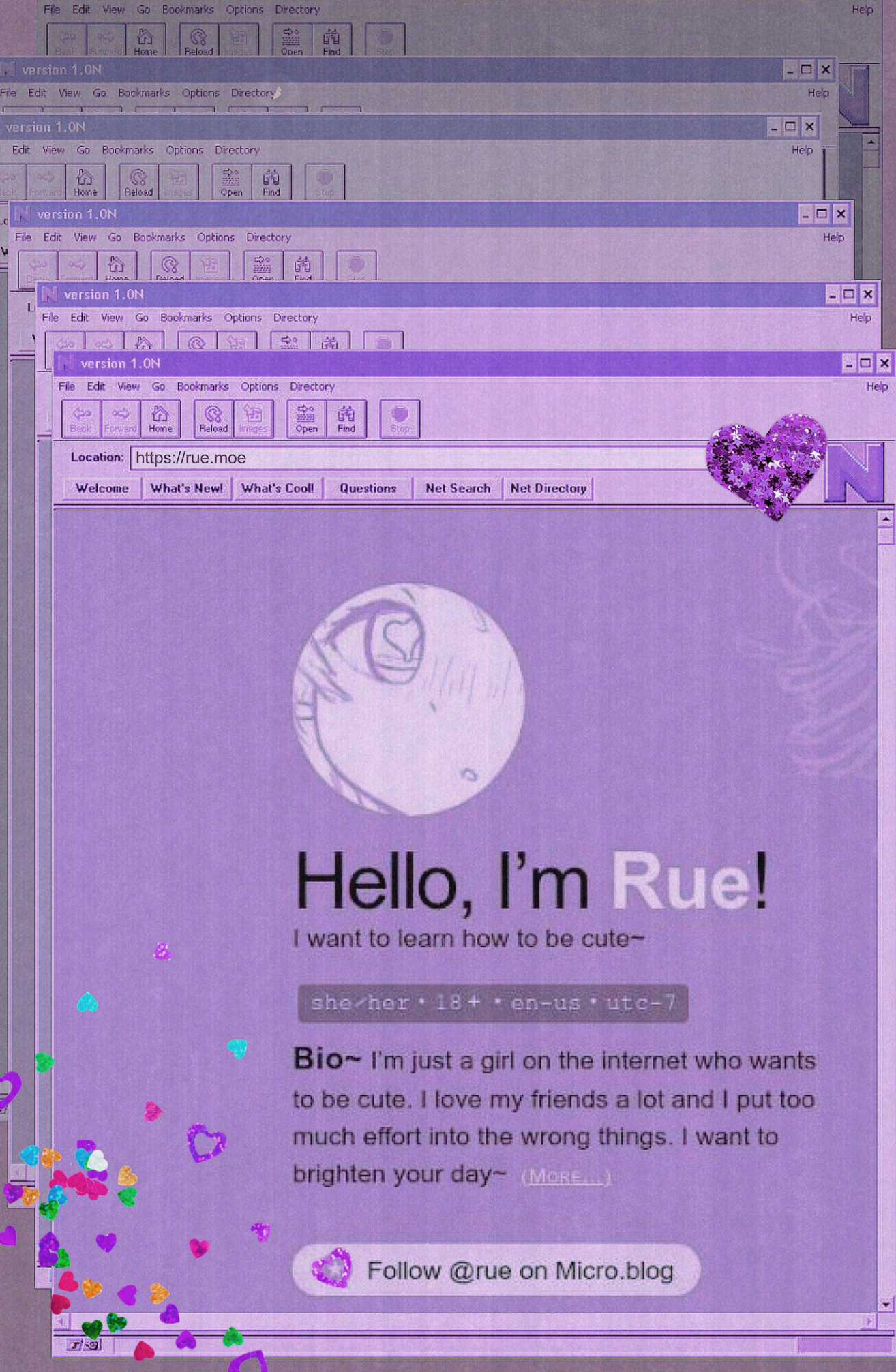


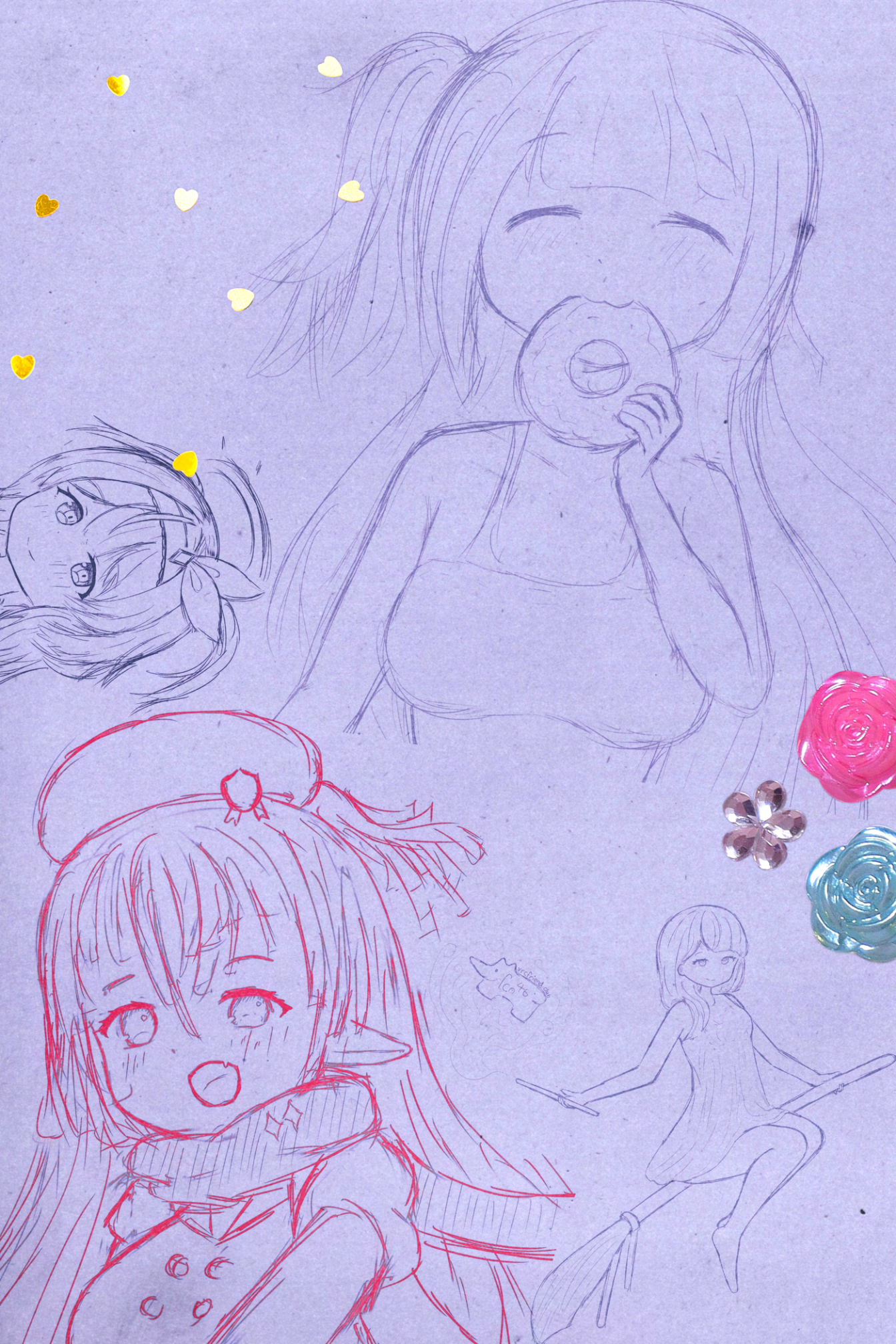












**THIS IS NOT THE END ALL
BE ALL VR ZINE.**

**THIS IS ONE OF MANY, JUST
A PUBLIC ADDITION TO THE
ENCYCLOPEDIC COLLECTION
OF ALL ZINES.**

**WE DID THIS.
SO CAN YOU.**

